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DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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The Ohio State University
2001

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This work provides a detailed account of the history of employment of blacks in the advertising industry. Yet because of the complexity of the elements that led to blacks participation in the industry, this work is more than a mere examination of employment. This study is the first to provide a comprehensive historical examination of the African-American involvement with the advertising industry and to examine blacks' role as image-makers. As a result, this work benefits scholars who have an interest in African-American history and culture, advertising history, or consumer culture.

African-Americans in the advertising industry stood at the center of the definition of the black consumer and, therefore, actively participated in the construction of black consumer identity. Consequently, given the role of consumption in identity formation, African-Americans in the advertising industry have been important and overlooked contributors to the formation of African-Americans individual and group identity. Through an examination of the construction of the African-American consumer by advertising professionals, this work helps broaden the understanding of black identity formation. This study also enhances the understanding of consumer culture through a discussion of the impact of race on consumption and on the formation of the consumer society.
There are four major components to this work. The first is a discussion of how blacks utilized the developing interest in the black middle class as a consumer segment to gain access to greater levels of participation in the advertising industry. The second is to examine the changing perception of the black consumer market among those in the advertising industry. Third, I analyze how changes in the institutional culture of the advertising industry led to employment opportunities for blacks. Finally, I show how blacks, once they achieved some level of decision-making in the industry, used their positions to present what they believed to be an authentic, non-stereotypical vision of African-American life via advertisements.
Dedicated to my wife
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INTRODUCTION

This book, as the title indicated, is a history of African-Americans in the advertising industry in the United States. Yet in that industry, the history of black Americans was about more than attaining employment. Their history shows dramatically how civil rights and equality of opportunity were concurrently involved. Economics and culture operated in terms of personal aspiration, group aspiration, and aspirations for all of American society.¹

The first purpose of this work is to provide a detailed account of the history of employment of African-Americans in the advertising industry. Yet because of the multiplicity of elements that led to African-American involvement in the industry, this work is more than a mere examination of employment involvement. This study is the first to provide a comprehensive historical examination of the African-American involvement with the advertising industry and to examine blacks' role as image-makers. As a result, this work will benefit scholars in a variety of disciplines who have an interest in African-American history and culture, advertising history, or consumer culture. Most obviously this work advances the historiography of advertising by examining the impact of racial issues on the industry. This work also provides important contributions to key areas of African-American history, including civil rights group activity and state and federal government actions to combat employment discrimination. In
addition, this study follows the path led by Juliet E.K. Walker in African-American business history through an examination of black entrepreneurship and activity within corporate America.²

Moreover, African-Americans in the advertising industry stood at the center of the definition of the black consumer and, therefore, actively participated in the construction of black consumer identity. Consequently, given the role of consumption in identity formation, African-Americans in the advertising industry have been important and overlooked contributors to the formation of African-Americans individual and group identity. Sociologists and anthropologists have provided an important theoretical framework for understanding the role of consumption in identity formation. But many of these studies, though often pioneering, have lacked historical specificity. Through an examination of the construction of the African-American consumer by advertising professionals, this work will help broaden the understanding of black identity formation. This study will also enhance the understanding of consumer culture through a discussion of the impact of race on consumption and on the formation of the consumer society.

During the years covered in this work the percentage of African-Americans in the mainstream advertising industry increased several hundred percent. Although statistics on minority employment are difficult to locate, oral tradition in the industry and articles in the trade press yield some information. In 1920 there were no blacks in the mainstream advertising industry. The first blacks to work in the mainstream industry in “other than a menial capacity” came in the mid-1940s. The first recognized, professional-level black to work in a mainstream agency
arrived in the industry in 1952. After the intense social and economic pressure brought to bear on the industry during the 1960s, however, the numbers of blacks in advertising quickly increased. Employment surveys of the largest advertising agencies conducted in the mid-1970s showed minority employment to be approximately 10 percent of the industry total. Moreover, minorities occupied nearly 5 percent of all professional and managerial jobs. Yet after the economic downturn of the mid-1970s, the percentage of blacks in the industry leveled off and failed to rise appreciably.³

There is also the issue of black-owned advertising agencies to consider. Although black agencies existed as early as 1920, most were simply placement agencies, meaning that staff members did not create advertising, but placed an advertisement created by a mainstream agency into a black newspaper or magazine. The first full-service black-owned advertising agency, the staff of which both created and placed advertising, was not founded until the early 1940s. Simultaneous with the growth of blacks in mainstream agencies in the 1960s and 1970s, was the appearance of several full-service black-owned agencies. Hence by the mid-1970s there were nearly 2,000 blacks working in some capacity in the advertising industry. Also, accompanying the increases in black employment in advertising were an increasing number of Asian and Hispanic Americans.⁴

It is also necessary to point out the terms that will be used throughout this work. "General market agency" or "mainstream agency" denotes an advertising agency whose personnel direct their ads to all groups of consumers, but focus
upon white middle class consumers. Likewise, the term “general market” is used to refer to the mass market made up of white middle class consumers. The phrase “full-service agency” is used to denote a firm with the capability to conduct all phases of an advertising campaign from conception to actual ad placement. Non-full service agencies have the capacity to handle one or more aspects of an advertising campaign and many specialize in a particular area of advertising such as copy creation or media buying. “Black-owned” or “black agency” is an agency whose ownership is black and that primarily constructs advertisements to reach minority consumers, but also has ads for the general market. Similarly, “black consumer market,” is used in reference specifically to African-American consumers. The term “advertisers” is a used to denote the clients of advertising agencies such as corporations or individuals.

Throughout the twentieth century, blacks have sought to emancipate and rehabilitate the image presented of them in advertisements. Communications scholars Jannette Dates and William Barlow posit that during the twentieth century there was a “war” going on over the African-American image. On one hand were white image-makers who created and maintained the negative, stereotypical portrayals of blacks. On the other hand have been the dual efforts of black consumers and black image-makers. Black consumers responded to negative representations by avoiding the products advertised. Black image-makers have responded to the demeaning representations by creating and maintaining their own version of the African-American image. “Thus the
definition and control of black images in the mass media," Dates and Barlow reason, "has been contested from the outset along racial lines, with white cultural domination provoking African American [economic and] cultural resistance."^5

Furthermore, the struggle by blacks to define their own image has led to a "split" in that image for much of the century, with the white version of blacks on one side and the black version of themselves on the other. As one of the leading image-producing industries, advertising has been in the forefront of the industries presenting an effectively negative image of African-Americans. As a result, blacks, more than any other English-speaking group in the United States, have had an adversarial relationship with the advertising industry.®

There are four major components to this work. The first is how blacks utilized the developing interest in the black middle class as a consumer segment to gain access to greater levels of participation in the advertising industry. Yet we cannot effectively analyze blacks' presence in the industry without understanding how the perception of the black consumer market changed over time. Consequently, my second purpose is to examine the changing perception of the black consumer market among those in the advertising industry. Third, I analyze how changes in the institutional culture of the advertising industry led to the opening up of employment opportunities for blacks. Finally, I show how blacks, once they achieved some level of decision-making in the industry, used their positions to present what they believed to be an authentic, non-stereotypical vision of African-American life via advertisements.®
Black decision-makers in so far as they could used advertising as a tool. Blacks in the industry used advertising to project a vision of a racially diversified consumer market and of African-Americans as a middle-class population. Furthermore, especially during the period of Black Nationalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, some blacks in the industry used advertising to project a vision of pride and liberation. Hence black image-makers were part of the effort to redefine blackness in the 1960s and 1970s. Advertisements from black-owned agencies, especially those directed specifically to black consumers, became part of the narrative of what exactly it meant to be black. This work does not posit that advertising images were the single factor in effecting cultural and social reforms. It does, however, echo the position taken by William Leiss in his work, *Social Communication in Advertising* in that advertising images, especially positive representations, were an important actor in effecting social changes relating to blacks. At the start of the twentieth century, the thought of black consumers and blacks as advertising personnel were far from the minds of most of the few corporate and agency executives then in existence. Instead, members of both groups were concerned with how to adapt to the expansion of the consumer society. By the late nineteenth century, advancements in mass production led to a supply of goods that outstripped consumer demand. As a result, advertising became recognized as a tool to convince consumers to buy items that they may or may not have needed or to convince them to purchase one brand over another. Although advertisements had existed since at least the eighteenth
century, not until the late nineteenth century did the importance of advertising become widely accepted in the business community. Thus, by the early twentieth century, the members of the advertising industry were on their way to becoming the voice of American consumer culture. And advertising was set to become an important aspect of modern culture.\footnote{9}

Yet consumer product advertising did more than simply persuade consumers to purchase goods. Advertising messages told of new advancements in technology and interpreted the meanings and uses of those advancements in the lives of consumers. In addition, depictions of everyday America life in advertisements gave consumers an image of who they were and what the population of the country looked like. In presenting that image, however, advertising personnel made no effort to be completely inclusive. Instead, as scholar Ronald Berman found, advertising executives aimed for the center and addressed their work to the largest possible group. Because of the role of advertising in product sales advertisements were directed towards consumers who were assumed to have the economic power to buy and thus maintain the consumer society.\footnote{10}

Historian Roland Marchand concurred with Berman’s assessment. Further, he reasoned that advertisers worked in the framework of a “market democracy,” in which one dollar equaled one vote. Within this structure those with more money were perceived to have more votes than others. Also, those who were assumed to have little or no money were left out of the system. Thus the consumer culture, as perceived by advertisers in the early twentieth century, was
not one in which everyone was recognized as a citizen. Marchand concluded that, based on the small number of advertisements in the black media, blacks were among those who were disenfranchised as consumers, just as most were as voters. Yet one fact that Marchand and other scholars have failed to account for was how people and groups reacted to being left outside of the advertising vision of the consumer society.\textsuperscript{11}

Although blacks were not pictured as consumers, they were not completely absent from advertisements or within the consumer culture. Like their fellow citizens, blacks consumed available goods and services to the extent that they were able. Despite their consumption, however, in advertisements images of blacks as lazy, ignorant, or violent proliferated. Negative images of blacks were also present on trading cards, dolls, children's books, cooking utensils, and other products. Caricatures of African-Americans were used in products like Niggerhead Tobacco, and black children were lampooned in images such as that of the Gold Dust Twins, symbols of a popular soap powder. Advertising executives did not challenge the demeaning images of blacks but, instead, used them in their work. The proliferation of demeaning images of blacks in commercial and leisure items was such that one scholar concluded: "The child growing up in the home of an average Northern family may not have been taught to hate the black race, but more than likely the child caught the basic principle of prejudice from day to day living."\textsuperscript{12}

The stereotyped images of blacks in advertisements reinforced the existing societal racial hierarchy. By picturing blacks in a fashion that in many ways
denied their humanity, advertising both reflected and helped to perpetuate existing racist sentiment about blacks. Even when pressed to present positive images of blacks, advertisers and agency personnel balked. Many agency personnel expressed a belief that to depict positive images of blacks would offend white consumers and negatively impact product sales. Moreover, positive images of blacks may have been taken as a direct challenge to both white authority and perceived societal norms. Further, advertisers and agency personnel believed blacks were not an important part of the consumer society. Blacks were in a degraded economic position and, therefore, lacked the ability to impact product sales. Consequently there was no need to appeal to black consumer patronage or to incorporate African-Americans into the fledgling advertising industry. Thus, lacking access to decision-making positions in the industry, blacks had few opportunities to challenge the demeaning images and they remained in place.  

In the years following the First World War, however, images of blacks in advertisements began to shift from demeaning stereotypes to a less pejorative but still subservient role. After the war, African-Americans were increasingly pictured as cooks, porters or agricultural laborers—a step up from items like Niggerhead Tobacco, to be sure, but nevertheless images that many blacks found servile and demeaning. Advertisers and agency leaders viewed servile representations of African-Americans as acceptable because this was an aspect of life and of occupations at which they assumed blacks were skilled. As archivist Faith Davis Ruffins demonstrates, in the early years of the century ethnicity
became a metaphor for authenticity. Hence if a black cook like Aunt Jemima or waiter like Uncle Ben said that a product was good, then advertisers assumed consumers would accept their testimonial as authoritative. Essentially, blacks were used as objects to sell products, but never as consumers who used them. Instead, consumers (and by relation the citizenry), as presented in advertisements, were white. Advertisements carried depictions of an America that, outside of black servants, was a homogenous white society, not a multi-racial heterogeneous one. African-American consumers were the “other” and depictions of them were only that of servant or were used for comic relief. In her work, *Making Whiteness*, Grace Hale argues, “Americans were people who could command the service of both blacks and consumer products. Advertising, both by picturing subservient blacks with products and celebrating whites as sovereign consumers, implicitly and explicitly figured the national consumer as white.” In picturing blacks in servant roles and whites in command, advertising images maintained the assumed structure of everyday society.

Yet as in other areas of life, African-Americans did not wholly accept this subservient role. Rather, as historian Robert Weems points out in his book, *Desegregating the Dollar*, throughout the twentieth century blacks have tried to use their economic power to gain dignity and respect. Although for much of the century issues of political, civil, and social rights, as well as of racial violence occupied blacks attention, the images propagated in advertisements never completely disappeared from their purview. Instead, blacks individually and collectively expressed their displeasure with product advertisements either...
through boycotts, selective purchasing campaigns, or other less formal measures. By voting with their dollars blacks struggled for more positive representations in advertisements and for recognition of their involvement in the consumer society, and, by relation, their citizenship.¹⁶

This work does not take the position that consumption provides liberation or freedom in the same manner as the extension of political and civil rights. But scholars have shown that consumption has been with and equated to citizenship. Scholar Charles McGovern argues that consumption was “a symbol of American social democracy.”¹⁷ So being recognized for their role in the consumer society was viewed by blacks as symbolic evidence of their status in society. In 1970, an advertising executive remarked, “Advertising plays an important role in demonstrating upward social mobility and is a yardstick in charting progress in the search for acceptance and recognition by the majority society.”¹⁸

The central theme of this work then is that African-Americans, both inside and outside the advertising industry, viewed advertising as an employment and financial opportunity—but at the same time as more than that. In addition to their professional and economic interests, throughout their history in the industry, blacks viewed advertising as a tool to effect cultural change in both the white and black communities. African-Americans used advertising not only to promote images of consumption, but also, within the advertisements to promote positive images of black life and culture (i.e. family life, academic achievement, religion, community, interpersonal relationships, and a multi-racial society). Hale demonstrates that the growth of consumer culture gave blacks a host of different
spaces within which to challenge their status as second class citizens. This work takes her argument a step further. Just as consumer culture gave blacks spaces within which to challenge their social status, likewise, the ubiquitous nature of advertising gave blacks a means to challenge the existing images of themselves as a group and to present an alternative vision.\textsuperscript{19} Advertisements were important cultural and social indicators.\textsuperscript{20} Hence the absence of positive images of blacks in advertisements conveyed the sense that they were not a functioning part of society in society. Because advertising was an important lens through which to view cultural and social changes, the presence, or absence, of positive depictions of racial groups mattered. Moreover, as the largest minority group in the nation African-Americans have been an important part of the political, social, cultural, and economic life and history of the United States. As a result, their representation in advertisements and visibility as citizens is an important indicator as to where the nation stands on issues of equality.\textsuperscript{21}

Despite the importance of blacks to the advertising industry, the existing literature on the advertising has given only passing attention to their role. This is likely related to the fact that most studies of advertising history analyze the industry in the years between 1880 and 1940, a period when there were no blacks in the mainstream industry. Blacks become part of the mainstream industry starting in the 1940s, but there are few works that have examined the industry in 1940s or in the following years. Yet authors who have examined the industry in this period have largely overlooked the impact of the racial revolution. The effort by blacks to change their image in advertisements and to increase the
presence of blacks in the industry has received only a brief mention. In his work, *The Mirror Makers*, historian Stephen Fox analyzes the advertising industry through a group biography of advertising leaders. While he mentioned some of the pioneering black advertising men and women, they receive only passing attention in the larger story. Hazel Warlaumont provides an intensive examination of the advertising industry during the 1960s in her book, *Advertising in the 60s*. Yet despite the importance of the civil rights movement in the decade, Warlaumont fails to provide any insight regarding the impact of the racial revolution on the industry. In *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes*, Juliann Sivulka makes mention of the factors behind an African-American presence in the industry, but she, too, gives little attention to the issue of minority impact and employment. Also, in *Split Image*, Jannette Dates examines blacks’ position in the advertising industry, but only as part of a larger examination of media-producing industries. Moreover, Dates’ examination focuses on the advertising industry in the 1960s and 1970s. As a result, her examination lacks the historical breadth to fully detail the methods by which blacks in the advertising industry worked to alter the black image. Gail Baker Woods, in *Advertising and Marketing to the New Majority*, provides some analysis of black-owned agencies, but the analysis is within a contemporary context and comes alongside an overview of other ethnic agencies. Meyer L. Stein, in his book, *Blacks in Communications*, provides a limited discussion of blacks in the communications field, but he discusses only three blacks who were in the advertising industry, and then only within the context of their current activities. 22
The image of African-Americans in advertisements has received greater attention than has the story of blacks in the advertising industry. In her work, *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus*, Marilyn Kern-Foxworth does examine the historical presentation of blacks in advertisements. Yet her analysis is heavily focused on a single black advertising image—Aunt Jemima. Tom Pendergast provides a more historical examination of African-American images in advertisements in his book, *Creating the Modern Man*, but he centered on expressions of masculinity. Moreover, African-American images were only a single part of his larger examination of images of masculinity. Further, Pendergast's chronological focus ends in the mid-1950s. William Van Deburg in his work, *New Day in Babylon* provides a limited analysis of the images of blacks in advertisements, primarily images prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s. Anthony Cortese provides an examination of minority images in advertisements in his work, *Provocateur*, but his subject matter is present day, rather than historical images.23

There has been only two very limited historical analysis of black consumerism. In *Desegregating the Dollar*, Robert Weems examines the development of a black consumer presence during the twentieth century. He also provides an examination of the development of the black middle class as a consumer segment increasingly sought out by advertisers. This pioneer work of great chronological breadth and range of topics gives only a general picture. Ted
Ownby advances Weems' work in his book, *American Dreams in Mississippi.* While providing an impressive level of detail, Ownby's work is limited to the experiences of black consumers in Mississippi.24

Anthropologists and sociologists have also made important contributions to the study of race and consumption. Elizabeth Chin in her work, *Purchasing Power,* offers an anthropological examination of black children and consumer culture. Yet Chin's is a contemporary study and lacks significant historical context. In "Different Children, Different Dreams," Ellen Seiter describes how children of different races were used in advertisements and the impact that such images had on their identity formation. Seiter's work was extended by Barbara Brown's examination of the impact of advertising images on minority teenagers. In "Advertising Influences on Majority and Minority Youth," Brown details the impact of the exclusion and inclusion of racial images in advertisements on minorities. She concludes that the exclusion of minority images in ads confused minority adolescents about their position as members of society. Recently Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár have shown how blacks in the advertising industry have used images of African-American consumption to impact blacks' group identity. In "How Blacks Use Consumption to Shape their Collective Identity," Lamont and Molnár point out the importance of African-Americans in the advertising industry in constructing images of black consumption. Yet they incorrectly present blacks' use of consumption as a contributing factor to identity formation and social membership as a contemporary rather than historical phenomenon. Lamont and Molnár also present black image-makers as solely
promoting conspicuous consumption through their advertising work. Hence they do not adequately detail blacks' use of advertising to promote positive images of African-American life and culture.\textsuperscript{25}

The story of African-Americans and the advertising industry has also been overlooked in accounts of African-American history. There has been some discussion of blacks' efforts to change the manner in which they were represented in advertisements, but these examinations have come within a larger historical examination. One work that provided some discussion of civil rights group campaigns against the industry was August Meier and Elliot Rudwick's account of the Congress of Racial Equality. Still, within Meier and Rudwick's examination of the group, the campaign against the advertising industry was only a small part of the analysis. Juliet E.K. Walker, in her encyclopedic account of African-American business history, \textit{The History of Black Business in America}, provides some limited examination of black advertising agencies, but her focus was on them as business enterprises and mentions only a few of the most well-known agencies.\textsuperscript{26} Although the existing literature is in many ways pioneering and suggestive, the time has come to extend and broaden the discussion and fill significant gaps.

There are a number of sources that support this work. Individual papers of persons connected with the advertising industry, oral interviews, and articles in the trade press were important. This work is heavily informed by a detailed examination of articles in \textit{Advertising Age}, \textit{Adweek}, \textit{Madison Avenue}, \textit{Printer's Ink}, \textit{Tide}, and \textit{Sales Management}, most of which have never been indexed.
Scholars of advertising have recognized the trade press as an especially important source because the articles provide insight into the ideas shared by the members of the advertising industry. The journals also provide discussions of advertising personnel's vision and understanding of America. Consequently, the individual trade journals constitute the basic source illustrating how the members of the advertising industry perceived both blacks in agencies and the black consumer market.27

This work proceeds chronologically, yet also thematically. Chapter One examines the discourse between African-American publishers and corporate executives that led to the first recognition of the black consumer market in the 1930s and 1940s. Black publishers were the initial catalysts in turning corporate attention to the black consumer market. Chapter Two analyzes the growth of media sources such as black-oriented magazines and radio to reach black consumers. As advertisers greater opportunity to present their sales messages to blacks many executives looked for guidance to do so effectively. As interest in the black consumer market grew, African-American entrepreneurs moved to take advantage and secure positions in advertising, marketing and public relations. Consequently, the second portion of this chapter details the emergence of African-American marketing and advertising specialists in the 1950s who guided corporate clients in their efforts to reach African-American consumers. Because of the multitude of changes ongoing in the period, chapters Three and Four share the same chronological period, 1960 to 1967, but each deals with different themes. Chapter Three devotes attention to the ways the early stages of the civil
rights movement affected the perception of the black consumer market. Social changes going on within the nation impacted the black consumer market and blacks used their economic power to force concessions from advertisers active in the black consumer market. This chapter details the ways in which members of the advertising industry dealt with changes going on among black consumers.

Chapter Four examines the pressure on the advertising industry that was brought by civil rights groups such as the National Urban League, Congress of Racial Equality, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Civil rights activists were aided in their efforts by state equal employment organizations that were conducting investigations into discrimination in the advertising industry. This chapter also details the activities of blacks in the advertising industry to press agency leaders to increase black employment.

The final four chapters of this study share the same chronological period, 1968 to 1975, but focus on different themes. Chapter Five details the impact of state and federal government equal employment commissions on the advertising industry. The New York City Commission on Human Rights and federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission each focused significant attention on the advertising industry during the period under examination. Chapter Six analyzes the various responses of the agency executives to the external pressure. In addition, this chapter discusses the internal pressure brought to bear by African-Americans in the industry on issues of minority recruitment, training, and employment. Chapters Seven and Eight analyze the Golden Age of blacks in the advertising industry and examines the impact of the racial revolution on the
industry. These final two chapters contain case studies of eight black-owned agencies that emerged between 1965 and 1975. Chapter Seven focuses on four black agencies that were founded yet failed before the end of the Golden Age. This second portion of this chapter details the reasons behind the founding of each agency as well as the factors leading to the failures of black-owned agencies. And chapter Eight examines four black-owned agencies that were able to survive and flourish in the period. Similar to the preceding chapter, the second half of chapter Eight details the factors leading to the success of black-owned agencies.

In 1954, historian David Potter declared that advertising had no social goals and no social responsibilities. For African-American practitioners of the advertising craft this has proven false. Given the depths from which the African-American image via advertising needed to be pulled, for blacks there was no question that advertising had a social role and that they, in addition to the need to sell products, had a responsibility to present realistic, authentic images of African-American life. In response to the question of what type of image of blacks he tried to convey in his work one black adman noted, "People working productively; people engaging in family life, you know, people being well-rounded, and being thoughtful; people caring about other people; good neighbors, good parents, whatever the case may be; people with dreams and aspirations, people with ambition."
Scholar bell hooks has argued, "American culture is obsessed with blackness, but primarily in a commodified form that can be possessed, owned, controlled, and shaped." Throughout the twentieth century, African-Americans have struggled to gain control over their images and present their own vision of exactly what blackness represents. African-Americans in the advertising industry have heretofore been an overlooked contributor to the struggle to define and shape blackness. Likewise, the important role that blacks in the industry have had in effecting cultural change and reform has not received adequate attention. Hopefully this study will contribute in no small way in alleviating these deficiencies.

The effort to create a place for African-Americans in the advertising industry was built upon the foundation of the black consumer market. Black newspaper and magazine publishers were in the forefront of generating advertiser and agency interest in African-American consumers and it is with this group that the story begins.
Notes

1 For an examination of a similar tale of how African-American professional women dealt with the juxtaposition of group versus individual aspirations see Stephanie Shaw, What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).


4 "Black Ad Agencies...And Then There Were 13," Black Enterprise (September 1979): 43-49.


6 Dates and Barlow, Split Image.

7 The labels of self-identification that African-Americans have used have varied throughout the twentieth century. The terms "Negro," "Black," "Afro-American," "Black American," and "African-American (with or without the hyphen"

8 Although done within a contemporary context, Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár have provided some insight into how blacks in the advertising industry have contributed to the individual and collective identity of African-Americans through images of consumption. See Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár, "How Blacks Use Consumption to Shape their Collective Identity," Journal of Consumer Culture (June 2001): 31-45. On blacks use of consumption as a tool for social and economic uplift also see Robert Weems, Jr., Desegregating the Dollar: African-American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century (New York: New York University Press, 1998). William


Marchand, 60-65. Estimates for African-American consumer spending power in the early twentieth century are unavailable. However, an article entitled "How Negroes Spent Their Incomes, 1920-1945," estimated black spending power in 1920 at $3,055,000,000. Thus, African-Americans did have a considerable amount of available spending capital, had advertisers chosen to recognize them as consumers. On the political, social, and economic conditions of African-Americans in the early twentieth century see Rayford W. Logan, *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901* (New York: Dial Press, 1954).


Hale, 167.


This work takes a position on advertisements between that established by Michael Schudson and Stuart Ewen. Schudson viewed advertisements as a relatively innocuous form of providing product and price information, Ewen considered advertisements as a mechanism of social control from corporate leaders. This work views advertisements as providing information about products and as an indirect form of social information.


Quoted in Cortese, 91.

CHAPTER 1 – 1920-1949

Black Publishers and the Black Consumer Market

In the years following World War I significant physical changes occurred in the African-American community. Foremost among these changes was the Great Migration, the movement of blacks from the countryside to the nation's cities. During the period from 1915 to 1930 between 1.5 and 2 million African-Americans moved their homes from the rural South to the urban North. The movement to urban areas placed more blacks in wage-earning positions and the overall income of the African-American population began to rise. Consequently it was in these postwar years that an effort to shift corporate attention to black consumers began. African-American newspaper and magazine publishers initiated the discussions and programs that helped to bring about that shift by calling attention to the black consumer market. These discussions were the first part of a three-stage process that resulted in corporate recognition of black consumers. First, came the solicitation and encouragement of members of the black press to advertisers to use their organs as a medium to reach black consumers. Second, advice and how-to articles began to proliferate in the trade press in the early 1940s. Third, research studies appeared that carefully detailed the employment patterns, income, education levels, and spending habits of black
consumers. This three-part process resulted in the eventual recognition of black consumers by the advertising industry. This recognition was also successfully translated into business opportunities for members of the African-American publishing establishment, and that would open the necessary doors for blacks to begin to enter the advertising industry.

Claude Barnett

Among black newspaper publishers, the earliest and most consistent effort to secure national advertising came from Claude Barnett, founder of the Associated Negro Press (ANP). Barnett was no stranger to the importance and potential impact of advertising. After graduating from Tuskegee Institute in 1906, he obtained a job at a Chicago post office. At the post office Barnett's position enabled him to read through the advertising industry periodicals that came through on a daily basis. He later recalled that it was while working at the post office that he learned to discern between good and bad advertisements as well as to learn the techniques in vogue in the industry.²

In 1913, Barnett had the opportunity to put his knowledge to use during the fiftieth anniversary celebration for the Emancipation Proclamation. He created a series of pictures featuring prominent African-Americans that he sold at the event. After the anniversary he created a sales brochure of his product and bought advertising space in black newspapers.
On the heels of moderate success from this venture, he started Claude A. Barnett Advertising with the slogan of "I Reach the Negro." His firm specialized in ad placement in the Crisis magazine, organ of the NAACP, and the Chicago Defender, and he also did some ad copy writing.  

Unable to secure a large number of clients for his firm, Barnett was forced to earn an income from other sources. In 1917, he and six other men formed the Kashmir Chemical Company, a cosmetics manufacturer. All of Barnett's partners were established businessmen who contributed substantial funds to the enterprise. Lacking such monetary resources himself, Barnett convinced his partners that his contributions to the firm's advertising would more than equal their shares of capital. At that time the black cosmetics field was dominated by three established companies: Poro College, the Madame C.J. Walker Company, and the Overton Hygienic Company. Even though the Kashmir firm was a new competitor in a crowded field, it quickly carved out a place for itself within the industry. Barnett later credited the success of the Kashmir concern to product quality and to the attractive advertisements for which he was largely responsible. 

In designing the advertisements for Kashmir, Barnett wanted to project a more positive image of African-Americans than was currently used in cosmetics advertisements aimed at black consumers. Advertisements from both black- and white-owned companies in the black cosmetics field featured images of what Barnett considered to be unattractive black women with "ugly kinky hair." Rather than adhering to the dominant trend, for Kashmir's advertisements Barnett used depictions of what he considered to be attractive black women in common.
everyday settings. He later recalled that the results “were so astounding that the founder of the Poro system and Madame Walker herself expressed great interest in this new concept of advertising beauty products for the Negro market and soon the entire field had switched to the positive approach pioneered by Kashmir.”

Although the Kashmir company eventually folded due to a trademark infringement suit, Barnett never forgot the lessons that he had learned while working in his advertising firm and designing ads for Kashmir. He concluded that the key to successful product promotion among black consumers was to approach them using respectful, attractive advertisements, rather than denigrating stereotypes.

In 1918 Barnett took a trip to California to visit his parents. To help fund the journey, he signed a contract with the Chicago Defender to work as an advertising representative as he traveled. During the trip to the West Coast, Barnett sold advertising space for the Defender and also created some advertising copy for black-owned companies in Kansas City. On the journey west, Barnett learned of the difficulty that black newspapers faced in securing national news about African-Americans. In order to meet this need he shifted his entrepreneurial focus from advertising and conceived of the Associated Negro Press (ANP). Barnett envisioned the ANP as an organization that would act as a clearinghouse to dispense news items to the black press. In addition to subscription fees, Barnett brought money into the ANP by linking it to an advertising exchange. To compensate the ANP for its service, black newspapers provided the organization with “white space,” the unsold space within their
papers. The Associated Publishers' Representative (APR), another concern owned by Barnett, then sold the previously unsold space to advertisers. Hence by 1920 Barnett was in a unique position to solicit advertising for black-owned newspapers throughout the country. It was in this capacity that he became the leading figure in pressing the nation's corporations and their advertisers to take note of the consumer power of African-Americans.¹

Through linkage to the ANP, the Publishers' Representative had access to advertising space in black newspapers throughout the country. Access, however, meant very little without companies to pay for the space. In order to secure buyers for the white space, Barnett repeatedly sent out letters to the nation's major advertisers. In this largely formulaic letter, he highlighted the $1 billion spent by African-Americans on consumer goods.² Barnett also argued that African-American buying habits were influenced by three key factors: appeals to racial pride, availability of company products, and advertising done by companies within the pages of the black press.³ Further, in his letters Barnett often used the conclusions of Paul Cherington, research expert at the J. Walter Thompson advertising firm, who reasoned that if a market like that of black consumers "were suddenly opened to American manufacturers on the other side of the ocean there would be commissions and councils and surveys to tell us of its value. But this one we grew up with, so we do not find appreciation easy. Moreover, it is not very comfortable for most manufacturers to be obliged to tell how little they know about it."⁴ Barnett also worked to convince advertising periodicals such as Printer's Ink and Tide of the value inherent in the black
consumer market and in the black press as a vehicle in reaching those consumers. He reasoned that gaining the support of the trade press would lead to gaining the support of advertisers. Thus Barnett's was a multi-faceted approach in which he targeted manufacturers, advertising firms, and the advertising press in an effort to generate revenue for the black press.9

In soliciting advertisements for the black press, Barnett approached companies such as Kellogg's and the American Tobacco Company, each of whom gave him a favorable response. Before these and other companies would consent to placing ads in the black press, however, they required circulation and marketing information to justify their investments. To provide circulation information, Barnett conducted an informal survey of the largest black newspapers that yielded a net rate of 380,000 copies per week. To provide information as to the fertile marketing opportunities available through the black press, Barnett encouraged newspaper publishers to collect all available consumer information about blacks in their area. Barnett requested that they provide employment and income figures, brand preferences, and purchasing information.10 After collecting the information Barnett created an informational mailing that he sent to several major advertisers in a search for clients. Some executives, like Robert Balderston of the National Dairy Council, strongly supported Barnett's assessment of the black consumer market. Balderston wrote:

Every time that I have an opportunity to survey the American market field I am renewedly impressed with the promotional possibilities of the Negro market. I feel as if we had somewhat neglected the cultivation of a group of people who are liberal spenders insofar as they have money to spend.
We have found in our work...that we can increase the consumption of dairy products among the Negro portion of the population very substantially by making the right kind of appeal and through the proper channels.\textsuperscript{11} The response from Robert Balderston was exactly what Barnett wanted and needed, an advertiser who appreciated the power of the black consumer market and that of the black press. Other manufacturers, however, did not readily duplicate this type of response. The attitude of other executives ranged from indifference to the assumption that their products already transcended racial lines.\textsuperscript{12} Hence, Barnett spent the late 1920s and early 1930s trying, and largely failing, to secure national advertisers through the APR. Barnett's efforts to secure advertising were limited in part by the competition of the leading company in the field of black newspaper advertising—the white-owned William B. Ziff company of Chicago.

\textit{William B. Ziff Company}

When entering the field of advertising sales for the black press, Barnett had two main concerns. First, was to use the APR as the money-making arm to subsidize the Associated Negro Press. Second, the APR was designed to "break into the lucrative and still white-monopolized field of national advertising for black newspapers."\textsuperscript{13} As the leading company in the field, Ziff was successful in securing ads for black newspapers. The company also found many subscribers to its service due to the fact that it could guarantee payment for advertisements. The firm's commission rate, though, at 35 to 50 percent, were considerably higher than the industry standard of 15 percent. The Ziff company could demand such high rates because of its success in drawing national advertisers to the
black press and because of its payment guarantees. This was a crucial
distinction for many black publishers because much of the advertising in their
papers was from local merchants who did not always pay for services that had
been rendered.\textsuperscript{14}

Despite its high fees the, W.B. Ziff company unquestionably drew more
corporate attention to the black press and black consumers through its efforts. In
1932 the company published a detailed booklet entitled “The Negro Market” that
described the overlooked black consumer. The forty-page booklet described
several facets of African-American life including leisure activities, occupational
status, and fraternal and institutional activity. The publication also argued that a
lack of directed and specific advertising appeals to black consumers restricted
sales of products that blacks were willing and able to buy. The booklet pointed
out the example of hundreds of thousands of black housewives and domestic
servants in the South who had never heard of Gold Medal flour, a leader in its
market niche. Hence not only did Gold Medal lose sales to black consumers but
also to the white families whose black servants bought the family groceries.

A \textit{Tide} reader echoed the importance of blacks in the consumption habits of
white families:

Advertisers probably don't realize how often choice of a brand for
household work depends not on the lady of the house but on her Negro
houseworker. In my own case, due to Ruth's emphatically stated
preferences we buy Tide, Ajax Cleanser, Windex, and Vanish rather than
similar products with other trade names. Now Ruth got her ideas about
these products somewhere. Possibly through convincing advertising or
advice from friends who had been influenced by some type of publicity
(most probably radio...).\textsuperscript{15}
Thus African-Americans were an important, yet overlooked, market segment with greater means to purchase than was commonly assumed. In addition, direct advertising appeals to black consumers through the black press would result in enthusiasm and product loyalty from black consumers and greater profits for the nation's companies. The booklet informed readers that while true that blacks read white magazines, "they regard an ad in their own papers as a direct invitation for their patronage."\(^{16}\)

In spite of the advertisers that the Ziff firm drew to the black press, its relationship to the black publishing industry was tenuous. The high commission rates combined with the Ziff company's demands that black newspapers carry other items published by the firm made the company's relations with black editors and publishers contentious. Notwithstanding this relationship, the Ziff company worked diligently to secure advertisements for the black press and to urge black publishers for more information about their circulation rates. Executives at the Ziff company believed that advertisements in the black press would increase substantially if black publishers had the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) verify their circulation figures. William B. Ziff told Robert Vann of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, "The future of the race field exists only upon the possibility of proving to the general advertiser that here is a large group of people well worth merchandising to and ably represented by a number of capable newspapers. The newspapers must be proven to the advertisers to represent the bone and sinew of the Colored man."\(^{17}\) However, many black newspapers did not have the money needed to pay for the yearly audit. Black publishers also felt that even if
their circulation figures had been verified, national advertising in their organs would remain scarce. Therefore during the 1920s and 30s few black newspapers contracted with the ABC for its auditing services.18

*Paul Edwards, Eugene Jones, and a New Focus for Black Advertising*

Ultimately the APR failed to break the Ziff company's hold on the black press. However, despite the failure of the APR and that of Barnett's proposed nationwide study of black consumers, Barnett remained involved in efforts to publicize the black consumer market. In 1932 he worked in concert with Fisk University professor Paul K. Edwards in an effort to interest corporations in black consumers. In 1932 Edwards published a book entitled *The Southern Urban Negro as a Consumer*, one of the first comprehensive studies of black consumers. In this largely statistical survey, Edwards thoroughly analyzed black consumption patterns in the South and concluded that blacks controlled hundreds of millions of disposable dollars that could be tapped by corporations. He concluded, however, that the reward of these black consumer dollars would be reaped by companies who exhibited an active interest in black consumers and who requested their patronage. He also illustrated that black consumers often avoided the products of companies whose advertisements featured denigrating images of them. Black respondents to Edwards questions on figures like Aunt Jemima and the Gold Dust Twins called the advertisements "disgusting," "a caricature," and "not a true picture of Negroes." Edwards wrote to Barnett in 1932 informing him of his findings and describing national advertisers as "greatly interested" in the black consumer market. Furthermore, he had contacted a
number of corporations that he described as giving "careful thought" to an active solicitation of black consumers. Moreover, Edwards wanted Barnett's help to publicize an experiment he had organized to show the efficacy of the black consumer market.\textsuperscript{19}

In his efforts to interest companies in black consumers, Edwards succeeded in convincing the executives of the Rumford Baking Company to conduct an experiment. The experiment called for the company to employ four black sales representatives over an eight-month period to test the impact of targeted appeals to black consumers. The two men and two women were to travel through major cities in the South demonstrating Rumford products to black consumers. The short-term success of the experiment convinced Edwards that the door was opened for more black sales employees with the Rumford Company. In the long-term, he believed that a successful demonstration of targeted appeals would result in other companies hiring black sales representatives and greater revenues for black newspapers. Edwards and Barnett worked in concert throughout the duration of the experiment to publicize the Rumford program. Barnett used his contacts in the black press to have newspaper editors announce the presence of the Rumford sales force in their respective cities. He also actively encouraged newspaper editors to publish the findings of Edwards' work on black consumers so as to gain more advertisers in their areas. The Rumford program was judged by the company to be a success and more black sales representatives were in fact eventually hired.\textsuperscript{20}
The Rumford experiment also may have led other companies to hire black sales representatives to target black consumers. One of the most famous of these early “special marketers” was James “Billboard” Jackson of Esso Standard Oil. Jackson had joined Esso as a special representative to the black community in 1935. His assigned responsibilities involved promoting company products to black consumers through advertisements, through appearances at black organizational conferences, and through various other promotions. Jackson’s efforts among black consumers on behalf of Standard Oil led to that company’s receiving a large percentage of all oil and gas sales to the black community. Furthermore, Jackson was so successful that he would later become the first (and for several years the only) black member of the American Marketing Association. Other companies that had black marketers in the 1930s included the Pepsi-Cola company, Beach Nut, Anheuser-Busch, and Philip Morris.21

Although Barnett’s efforts in publicizing the Rumford experiment were partially responsible for the increased presence of black sales representatives at white-owned companies, he nevertheless sought to protect African-American business ventures. In the search for advertising he consistently went first to the largest black-owned companies. For example, at one point he suggested a cooperative advertising program for the three largest black-owned cosmetics firms. He wrote to F.B. Ransom of the Madame C.J. Walker Company, “Do you think it possible for the three big companies, Mme. Walker, Poro, and Overton, to get together on a program of occupying enough space in the papers to overshadow the white firms, gradually excluding them?”22 Barnett’s goal was to expand opportunities
for black companies and the black press without putting either at a disadvantage. He was frustrated by the fact that a number of white-owned companies seemed to be making money off of black consumers without there being any real benefit to the black community. Barnett decried the fact that firms like the Plough Chemical Company made substantial profits from its African-American line of cosmetics and had numerous ads in the black press but had no blacks working at its headquarters. "If we are to have segregated institutions," he reasoned, "we ought to get whatever economic values go with such forced solidarity." Barnett's was a conscientious protection of black-owned business that would fade in future years.

The mid-1930s witnessed a turning point in the discussion of black consumers. In 1935 Eugene Jones, executive secretary of the Urban League, published an article in the government publication, *Domestic Commerce*. In his article, Jones described the purchasing power of black consumers as an attraction for white corporations rather than as an enhancement for black business. Prior to Jones's article, discussions of black consumer power centered on its viability in improving black-owned business. From the turn of the century African-American business figures, led by Booker T. Washington and members of the National Negro Business League, argued for spending black consumer dollars with black business. The Jones article began a discourse that was focused away from black consumers using their dollars to increase revenue for some segments of the black business community and toward using it to
encourage employment of black sales, advertising, and marketing figures. Thus the black consumer market began to be viewed as a means to gain employment opportunities for African-Americans.  

Newspaper Representatives

Due to increasing commitments to the ANP, Claude Barnett's interest in advertising began to wane in the late 1930s. Still, Barnett was not the only publisher eager to secure more advertisements for the black press. Robert L. Vann, publisher of the Pittsburgh Courier was also interested in increasing advertising revenues for his organ. For many years Vann, like other black publishers, had worked with the W.B. Ziff company to procure advertisements. In 1934, though, in a move Vann's biographer credited to Ziff's high commission rates and for offensive articles in a supplement Ziff forced his clients to carry, Vann severed the Courier's relationship with Ziff. Vann moved his advertising business to the H.B. Chron Company. Chron, a former manager with the Ziff Company, had organized his own advertising concern and worked with Vann and other publishers. After working with Chron for a five years, in 1939 Vann purchased the company and reorganized it into Interstate United Newspapers (IUN). Like Claude Barnett's Publishers Representative, IUN was designed to secure advertisements for the black press and to keep the money in the African-American community.

Initially IUN had difficulty attracting both national advertisers and black newspapers, many of which remained with the Ziff company. The company's fortunes began to turn, though, in the early 1940s. Attracted by other publishing
interests, W.B. Ziff gradually withdrew from the field of advertising solicitation for the black press. Ziff's withdrawal left IUN as the largest existing representative for black publishers. Also, as a result of employment needs generated by World War II, a second wave of black migration had begun. African-Americans were moving to the nation's cities in order to take advantage of jobs in the defense industries. Some business leaders, pressed by repeated solicitations from IUN, began to take an active interest in the urbanizing black populace, viewing it as a developing consumer segment. In response to a growing interest from business leaders and work by the IUN, information about the black consumer market began emerging in marketing industry trade magazines.

Black Consumer Market Experts

In the early 1940s African-American marketing experts began to appear and to give advice to corporations interested in reaching black consumers. In Los Angeles, Floyd C. Covington, executive director of the Los Angeles Urban League, established himself as that city's leading expert on black consumers. Corporations approached Covington for advice on their marketing campaigns, advertising copy, radio shows, and package labels. While he was not directly responsible for the creation of advertising copy, Covington's role was more that of consultant once ads had been created. For example, Bullock's, a major Los Angeles department store, ran a newspaper advertisement illustrated with an African-American servant helping a man on with a coat. After viewing the ad, Covington approved of the manner in which the African-American was dressed and the position he was depicted in, but he objected to the language used: "Ah
see you-all got another one of dem fine Bullock suits, Boss.” Covington corrected the advertisers by counseling them to avoid the use of dialect and not to use the word “boss” as African-Americans viewed it as representative of a slave past.²⁹

Covington also compiled a list of rules for advertisers to follow when approaching black consumers. Things to avoid included not only dialect, but terms such as “Auntie” and “boy,” and the use of any other term than the word “Negro,” capitalized, in referring to blacks. In terms of the things to be sure to do, Covington directed advertisers to use their ads to recognize blacks as good customers, actively cultivate their patronage for all types of products, and to place ads in media where blacks could see and hear them. Covington was one of the first recognized experts on the black community, and much of his work would be extended in later years by David Sullivan, who quickly became the recognized black consumer market expert.³⁰

Largely as a result of his affiliation with leading journals in the advertising trade press, David Sullivan replaced Covington as the country’s leading expert on the black consumer marketplace. Throughout the decade, Sullivan spoke before advertising and marketing organizations and published a number of widely read statistical and advice-laden essays on the black consumer. One of Sullivan’s most important and widely read pieces was published in the March 1943 issue of Sales Management, a leading marketing periodical. Entitled “Don’t Do This—If You Want to Sell Your Products to Negroes!” the piece gave the following advice:
Don't exaggerate Negro characters, with flat noses, thick lips, kinky hair, and owl eyes.... Avoid Negro minstrels. Avoid even the use of white people with blackface and a kinky wig for hire to depict a Negro.... Don't constantly name the Negro porter or waiter "George." He could be John, James, or Aloysius, for that matter. Nothing makes Negroes angrier than to be called "George...." Avoid incorrect English usage, grammar, and dialect. In other words, get away from "Yas suh, sho, dese, dem, dat, or dat 'ere, gwine, you all...." Don't picture colored women as buxom, broad-faced, grinning mammies and Aunt Jemimas. Negroes have no monopoly on size.... Don't refer to Negro women as "Negresses...." Avoid, even by suggestion, "There's a nigger in the woodpile," or "coon," "shine," and "darky...." Don't illustrate an outdoor poster, car card, advertisement, or any other advertising piece showing a Negro eating watermelon, chasing chickens, or crap shooting.... Don't picture the "Uncle Mose" type. He is characterized by kinky hair and as a stooped, tall, lean and grayed sharecropper, always in rags.... Always avoid the word "Pickaninny," or lampooning illustrations of Negro children.... Don't insult the clergy.  

The article also went on to describe the impact on sales of company's that had offended black consumers. In the late 1930s the American Tobacco Company faced a loss in sales after distributing a package illustrated with "Nigger Hair." Blacks had been so incensed that the company was forced to apologize and withdraw the product from market, but it had yet to recapture its lost sales.  

Readers were further cautioned by the example of the Noxzema Chemical Company. The company's all-purpose skin cream had once experienced wide sales in the African-American community. The company made the mistake of sending out a credit letter with the caption "Nigger in the Woodpile" complete with a drawing of a black man peeking around a pile of wood. The day before the story of the credit letter was released in black newspapers, Sullivan made a survey to find out the status of Noxzema sales in the black community and discovered them to be vigorous. Making the same survey after the story's release, he found sales to be virtually nonexistent. The lesson, he cautioned
readers, was not only to avoid the demeaning extremes of the American Tobacco Company and Noxzema company, but, also, to approach black consumers respectfully. Accompanying Sullivan's article was a note from the editor entitled "Why This Article is Important." Editors reasoned that while the exact size of the black market had not yet been determined, estimates placed it higher than the population of 14 states. Additionally, the black consumer market was one that "no manufacturer can afford to ignore." Sullivan's reasoning was significant to corporate marketing programs because it helped initiate the proliferation of "how to" articles designed to target black consumers. Moreover, Sullivan's article inaugurated an ongoing dialogue among whites and blacks interested in the black consumer market that would continue for the next three decades.  

Part of the reason for Sullivan's rise to the position of "expert" on the black consumer market was that his advice came on the heels of one the first major discussions on the black consumer market. In mid-1942 the New York Amsterdam Star-News sponsored a forum on the black consumer market, replete with experts on the market and its meaning to advertisers. Participants in the forum argued that the black consumer market represented 15 million customers with a potential spending power of over six billion dollars. Further, black consumers represented a market larger than most of the nation's export markets and that it demanded cultivation now and in the post war period. John Hagan, an advertising space buyer, in the symposium further argued that if the black consumer market were to be properly cultivated black marketing experts would have to be employed in that capacity.
White space buyers, Hagan reasoned, lacked the interest and expertise to give the market proper attention, and "all have infantile notions about Negro buying habits."\(^{33}\)

When *Advertising Age* published reports of the forum, readers responded favorably. Edward J. Duffy of Flushing, New York, noted that "It is nearly time that advertisers and space buyers would start to realize the value of the Negro market," and that "there is a vital need for space buyers to get busy." An editorial published a week later agreed with both Duffy and the participants of the market forum and argued that in future years blacks had to receive fair treatment as consumers. Prejudice, the editorial argued, had led American corporations to neglect "one of our greatest human and economic resources." African-Americans were a viable consumer market that if properly cultivated could yield impressive dividends for corporations, black consumers, and the nation as a whole. Hence by the mid-1940s, the leading journals of the trade press had begun to elicit an interest in the African-American consumer marketplace.\(^{34}\)

*Surveys on the Black Consumer Market*

In 1945, David Sullivan published another article that further heightened the interest of the trade press. He demonstrated not only a measurable rise in income for African-Americans but also delineated how it was spent. In addition, Sullivan argued that the economic gains that blacks had made due to the war would continue to increase after its conclusion. Table 1.1 provides a portion of Sullivan's research.\(^{35}\)
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<th>1920</th>
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<td>Total Black Income</td>
<td>$3,055,000,000</td>
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<td>Housing</td>
<td>647,744,800</td>
<td>1,718,430,000</td>
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<td>Food</td>
<td>702,742,000</td>
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<td>Clothing</td>
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<td>1,121,610,000</td>
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<td>Drugs, Proprietaries</td>
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<td>318,990,000</td>
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<td>Automobile</td>
<td>30,554,000</td>
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<td>Tobacco</td>
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Table 1.1: How African-Americans Spent Their Incomes, Selected Characteristics, 1920, 1943

IUN built upon Sullivan’s research conclusions as it solicited advertisers for the black press. Led by sales manager William G. Black, who had considerable experience in advertising, IUN found increasing success in the early-1940s in convincing advertisers that the black press was the most direct way of communicating with increasingly prosperous black consumers. During the decade, IUN expanded its operations from simple ad placement to copy creation, merchandising advice, field support, and, most important, market research. In addition, IUN aggressively advertised its services and the efficacy of the black press in reaching the black consumers in all of the major industry trade journals. Prospective clients were teased with headlines such as “They Get 7-Billion from a Few Millions,” to convey the idea that a small investment in advertising in the black press yielded large rewards. Other eye-catching headlines included “Pardon Us, Some New Customers Are Waiting For You,” in which prospective...
advertisers were told that black consumers responded when presented with "an invitation to buy," especially when it came in the pages of the black press.

In 1946, IUN and the Research Company of America (RCA) conducted the first national survey of African-American brand preferences. There had been other surveys of the black consumer market in the past, such as that conducted by the Afro-American newspaper chain, but all had been confined to a specific city or region.37 The IUN/RCA survey elicited responses from 5,000 black families in 27 major cities. Through the survey, IUN was able to estimate not only how blacks spent their estimated $10 billion income, but was able to validate the firm's role in reaching black consumers. The survey illustrated that African-Americans were brand conscious, often buying the leading brand of a particular product. Also, because racial discrimination limited blacks' leisure choices, African-Americans were more likely to entertain at home. Therefore blacks bought more food and liquor than whites of the same income bracket. The IUN study combined with the earlier research by David Sullivan to provide conclusive evidence of substantial African-American purchasing power. The IUN study was also important in that by the end of 1947, all of the major sales and marketing trade journals had broadly reported its results.38

A Visible Black Consumer Market

By the late 1940s, then, the efforts of black newspaper publishers, David Sullivan, IUN, the Research Company of America, and a host of lesser-known entities had resulted in the establishment of a set of general assumptions about black consumers. These assumptions remained largely unchanged for much of
the next two decades. Corporate executives and advertisers learned that the war had made African-Americans an urban population. Moving from the South to the North and from the countryside to the cities in search of jobs created by the Second World War, blacks now constituted a major segment of the nation's cities. Hence, if advertisers hoped to see the products they represented succeed in the cities, they learned they would have to take black consumers into greater account. The African-American consumer market represented a larger potential market than the entire nation of Canada. Out of all the under-developed markets in existence after World War II, a writer in one leading magazine reasoned that "The largest and most important of these markets — and the greatest unrealized opportunity, perhaps — is among Negroes." Blacks were a population with the income and desire to spend, but only with those companies who worked for their patronage.39

Experts on the black consumer market also said that blacks, more so than any other group of consumers, were brand conscious. African-Americans "bought the best" when it was available, for it assured them of product quality. In part blacks emphasis on brand name goods was a response to the pattern of some grocers who short-weighted their purchases or tried to pass off poor quality goods onto them. Buying brand name goods was one way to avoid lower product quality and to guarantee fairness in the marketplace. Moreover, blacks, like other consumers, viewed brands as symbols of class status. The ability to purchase the number one brand of liquor, soap, or automobile was reportedly
taken as a sign of affluence and standing within the black community. In 1949 this idea would be developed in a widely reprinted *Ebony* magazine editorial entitled “Why Negroes Buy Cadillacs:”

Just as to white America, the Cadillac is a sign of wealth and standing, so to Negro Americans the Cadillac is an indication of ability to compete successfully with whites, to maintain the very highest standard of living in this nation. It is more than just “keeping up with the Joneses,” more than just a matter of caste and class. To a Negro indulgence in luxury is a vindication of his belief in his ability to match the best of white men... It is a worthy symbol of his aspiration to be a genuinely first class American... Long ago they [African-Americans] found out they could not live in the best neighborhoods or hotels, eat in the best restaurants, go to the best resorts because of racial discrimination. But in their own neighborhoods luxuries have never had any restriction.\(^{40}\)

Thus in a world of segregation and discrimination, now it was possible to view the purchase of number one or luxury brands as part of the fight against the same segregation and discrimination that had engendered it. *Ebony*, as Dwight Brooks illustrated, presented consumption as evidence of success and also equated it with social and political equality.\(^ {41}\)

In addition, marketing experts viewed black consumers as brand loyal and race conscious. Once African-Americans had decided on a product to purchase, marketers reasoned, they stuck with that product in higher numbers than other groups. Studies illustrated that blacks bought a significantly smaller number of different brands than did white consumers (who were taken to be the common standard of measure). Therefore, if one could capture the spending of African-Americans, marketers believed that their spending would remain with the particular product. However, when it came to black consumer support, it was not enough to simply be the number one brand of a particular product. Instead the
racial consciousness of African-Americans led them to purchase goods from companies who hired black workers and advertised in the African-American press. In their larger fight against discrimination and segregation, blacks had developed a tradition of using their consumer power to achieve social ends.42 During the 1930s this tradition was expressed in the "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaigns against white retailers in black communities. In the 1940s that technique took the form of African-Americans' actively purchasing products of companies who had a well-known policy of non-discriminatory hiring. One black marketing expert noted, "If an employer has an unfair employment policy, and it's known to Negroes, he can advertise, he can promote, he can do anything he wants to, and he won't sell merchandise."43 Also, executives were told that advertising their products in African-American newspapers and magazines was important in their wooing of black consumers. While it was true that blacks read mainstream magazines, executives learned that blacks regarded advertisements in their own race-specific organs as "an invitation to buy." Thus one could not approach black consumers in the same way that one did white consumers, at least not if one had hopes of success. Instead, advertisers were told to accept the adage that, "Everything the Negro buys is not advertised in the Negro press, but it's a good bet that everything advertised in the Negro press is bought by them." To reach black consumers advertisers learned they would have to be willing to accept the higher cost of preparing targeted advertisements for black consumers and for the higher line rate of ads in the black press.44
To show the efficacy of the black consumer market, the trade press began printing ever more frequent reports of marketing campaigns designed to attract black consumers. One of the most widely reported campaigns of the late 1940s was the Pepsi-Cola company's "Leaders in Their Field" program. Led by Edward F. Boyd, who had been hired by the company to head up its special markets division, Pepsi designed the Leaders campaign to increase its sales and create a positive product image among African-Americans. Rather than emphasizing price, which was standard throughout the country, Pepsi used advertisements to link itself to leading African-American figures. The ads contained a large picture of a prominent black figure such as Ralph Bunche at work in his professional surroundings. The picture was accompanied by a description of the subject's achievements with an emphasis on how he or she overcame discrimination. Below each picture was a Pepsi bottle, which, though never stated explicitly, implied that prominent blacks drank Pepsi. Though no study was ever made of the sales impact of the campaign, the company and the members of the soft drink industry considered it a success. Other companies targeting the black consumer market in the 1940s and 50s would copy the Leaders campaign and its tactics of "implied emulation" in their own marketing programs. Harvey Russell, former vice-president of special markets, later recalled that the company's marketing program to African-Americans was so successful that the company would later make efforts to distance itself from them. At a convention in the 1950s company president Walter Mack stated that the company needed to shed its image a "nigger Coke" if it were to grow in the future.
Increased Support for the Black Consumer Market

The effort to interest corporate executives in the black consumer market were enhanced tremendously by the emergence of *Ebony* magazine in the late 1940s. Led by publisher John H. Johnson, *Ebony* provided companies with a mechanism to reach a large portion of the black consumer market effectively. The magazine’s tremendous circulation numbers combined with its nationwide reach provided companies an unrivaled opening into black America. Despite its unprecedented circulation numbers, though, the magazine had difficulty securing advertisements. In fact, it was not until Johnson began to hold one-on-one meetings with corporate executives that the magazine began to receive substantial advertisements. Johnson was forced to go over the heads of advertising agency executives and instead solicit advertisement support directly from their clients.46

With the success of *Ebony* magazine, Johnson supplanted David Sullivan as the recognized expert on black America. Johnson was a ceaseless advocate of the black consumer market. Though many of his actions may be read as a self-serving effort to increase revenue to his own publishing ventures, Johnson’s importance in gaining corporate recognition of black consumers cannot be overestimated. Johnson spoke before trade groups, met personally with corporate executives, and published numerous articles on black consumers in the advertising trade press. In some ways the magazine was simply in the right place at the right time. *Ebony* emerged in the years following World War II when African-Americans not only had more money to purchase goods, but also, as
suggested above, a number of highly publicized surveys of African-American consumer spending habits had appeared. Thus not only were blacks increasingly able to purchase, but American corporations were more ready to recognize and invite black consumers to buy their products than at any other time in the past. While true that Johnson did have a considerable struggle on his hands to win ads for *Ebony*, advertisers eventually began supporting the magazine in unprecedented numbers. His efforts were undoubtedly responsible for the increase in corporate attention toward black consumers.47

In 1948 the heads of the American Tobacco Company, Phillip Morris, Pepsi-Cola, and Lever Brothers announced ad campaigns targeted at African-American consumers. This was a major victory for advocates of the black consumer market as these companies were among the largest corporate advertisers in the nation. Lever Brothers president Charles Luckman told a group of businessmen: “Give the members of our minority groups an opportunity and you will find it the best stroke of business you ever pulled. And you’ll be helping America to realize more fully the democratic ideal.”48

Targeting black consumers was part of a larger effort by Charles Luckman both to increase the number of potential consumers and to overcome racial discrimination. He had a history of confronting issues that hampered consumption. He often chided business leaders to be more aggressive in meeting the goal of increasing the standard of living for all of the nation’s workers. In his view everyone, “even the child who arrived five minutes ago,” was a potential customer. Therefore, it was bad business to avoid African-
American consumers, a major segment of the population. In opening up marketing efforts to all consumers, business leaders would fulfill the larger goal of creating more consumers and increasing profits.

Luckman also considered the elimination of racial discrimination an important goal. He had begun his business career as a salesman in the black section of Chicago and was aware of the impact of discrimination on African-American business owners and consumers. He had witnessed black consumers who wanted to buy the products he represented but who lacked the resources to do so. Luckman later recalled that many of his ideas on business support for ending discrimination were based on his Chicago experiences. Further, Luckman often stated the need for equal dealings between people regardless of race or background. As a member of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights he was in a unique position to see scientific results of studies which examined the economic impact of discrimination. Thus a program specifically targeting black consumers would lead to the ultimate strengthening of the nation as a whole.49

The idea that there was an important, undeveloped market of black consumers within the United States moved a growing number of companies to hire blacks as sales and marketing representatives. While some companies like Pepsi-Cola and Esso Standard Oil had employed black marketing men in the 1930s, the decade of the 1940s saw a veritable explosion of blacks employed in that capacity. However, while several of the nation’s corporate executives had recognized the importance of having a marketing program for black consumers, their advertising representatives did not. Despite the increased visibility of the
black consumer market, advertising agencies remained closed to African-Americans. Notwithstanding the recalcitrance of mainstream advertising firms to employ African-Americans, though, blacks continued to be active in their own segregated ad firms that operated on the periphery of the industry.

**African-Americans in the Advertising Industry**

African-Americans had operated advertising firms since at least the 1920s. From the creation of firms like Claude A. Barnett Advertising through the 1930s, several black-owned agencies were founded, though few lasted more than a few years. Black-owned agencies during the 1920s and 30s were primarily ad placement agencies. Few actually created any advertising copy; instead most retooled advertisements created by mainstream agencies for the black press. One obvious problem black-owned agencies faced in the 1930s was the Great Depression, when most companies of any type were scraping by rather than thriving. More important, though, was that there were few customers for the services of a black-owned advertising agency. Such an agency had little chance to produce ads for mainstream companies. Instead, they were limited to producing work for local businesses to be placed in black newspapers or on black radio shows. Also, the efforts to establish a functioning agency were limited by the fact that the major outlet for black advertising, the black press, either operated their own advertising departments or engaged representatives like the William B. Ziff company or IUN to solicit advertisements. The
development of a stable black-owned agency would have to await the prosperity
generated by World War II and the wide recognition of the black consumer
market.

David J. Sullivan Advertising

When he founded David J. Sullivan Advertising in 1943, David Sullivan
brought several years of experience in marketing to his work. As discussed
above, he had been a successful salesman, newspaper executive, and
consultant. Sullivan had also been the district manager of the black consumer
market program of the Wilson Distilling company. In addition, he had completed
research on the black consumer market for Beech-Nut, Sacony-Vacuum, and the
General Baking Company. As Philip Salisbury, editor of Sales Management
noted, "He knows his market as few whites know theirs." Sullivan spent much of
the 1940s working in the capacity of consultant. He performed numerous market
research studies and wrote on the results of his research in the advertising trade
press. He also periodically worked as a consultant for the J. Walter Thompson
advertising agency on the company's ads in the black press. In addition, he
found local clients in New York for whom he created advertising copy that was
placed in the black press. Sullivan's firm was able to handle several phases of a
marketing campaign, from planning to creation to placement, and he was the
recognized authority on black consumers. Sullivan utilized standards established
by the American Association of Advertising Agencies and served a number of
blue-chip clients. However, the uncertainty generated by the Second World
War caused an upheaval in his client base that he was unable to recover from.
After some of his major accounts left, the lack of a stable client base forced him from business in 1949. Sullivan’s business was also limited by the aggressive marketing of IUN and its consultant services. After closing his firm, Sullivan spent the next fifteen years and over 1,200 resumes trying to find employment in a mainstream advertising agency.\textsuperscript{51}

\textit{Andrews, Geiger & Hailstolk}

In 1945, the firm of Andrews, Geiger & Hailstolk, Inc., opened in Harlem. The firm’s three principals looked to use their expertise on black consumers to expand their business. One of the founders, F. Linwood Hailstolk, like David Sullivan, brought a considerable background of experience in sales and marketing to the firm. He had worked in the advertising departments of black newspapers in Chicago and New York as an advertisement solicitor. In addition he had worked as a film promoter for Paul Robeson and in the distribution of a series of independently produced films. Moreover, Hailstolk had been the advertising manager of a cosmetics firm. Another principal, Roland Geiger, had been a company executive with the Standard Life Insurance Company. The third, Leon Andrews, helped finance the company but had no active day-to-day role. Taken together the firm’s three principals had considerable experience but they also faced the same limitation that other black-owned agencies would. Black agencies were limited to selling products aimed at black consumers through black media. Their claim to special expertise on the black consumer helped them to gain some clients, but it limited their acquisition of others.\textsuperscript{52}
Brandford Advertising

The first black-owned agency to offer complete advertising services in-house was the Brandford Advertising agency. The agency was the brainchild of Edward Brandford, a commercial artist and founder of the famed Brandford Models. In 1946 at a lavish ceremony at the Hotel Astor in New York City, Brandford had announced the founding of the Brandford modeling agency. Reasoning that black women were often denied adequate representation in advertisements, Brandford founded the agency to give advertisers a well from which to draw when looking for African-American models. In addition, the agency would serve as a training ground for African-American women looking to enter the modeling field. The founding of the agency was hailed by several writers in the black press as "an historic incident" and "the beginning of something we Negroes have known should have existed for a long time." The agency soon came to be widely recognized within the advertising community, and models with the "Brandford look" became a sought-after commodity for companies engineering campaigns in the black consumer market.

A few years after founding the modeling agency, Brandford sought to translate its success over to a full-service advertising agency. In founding this agency he had reason to expect to be successful. His models were widely used in campaigns aimed at black consumers, he had experienced years of success as a commercial artist, and his firm was staffed with men and women with years of experience in copy writing, public relations, and product promotion. Though his firm was able to handle any type of advertising campaign, Brandford, like other
pioneers in African-American advertising, sought to position his firm as the expert on the black consumer market. He hoped that companies interested in the black consumer market would allow his advertising firm to do the job of creating an entire campaign. He reasoned that there would be no need for companies to go elsewhere to create adds for the black consumer market when the models, artists, and public relations experts were resident in one firm. Unfortunately for Brandford, his agency was a few decades ahead of its time. While executives were eager to use his models for campaigns to black consumers, he found that they were less eager to use the services of his advertising agency. Like other black-owned agencies of the 1940s, Brandford Advertising was never able to secure more than a few local clients looking to place ads in the black press and it remained a small firm.\textsuperscript{54}

\textit{William B. Graham Advertising}

The best known black-owned advertising firm of the 1940s was the W.B. Graham Agency. The Graham agency had many elements going for it that other black-owned agencies could not match. First was the agency founder William B. Graham and the experience and clients he brought to the firm. Graham had vaulted to fame in the early 1940s during a marketing campaign for Pabst Sales, a beer manufacturer. Pabst hired Graham to increase the company’s sales in Harlem. Graham made an informal survey of the area by talking to bar owners and patrons as to their desire for Pabst beer. He then removed the white salesman from the Harlem territory and replaced him with a black salesman. The simple switch had tremendous results. In all of 1940 the company had sold only
15,000 cases of beer in Harlem. In May, 1942, though, a short time after the switch, the company sold 12,000 cases in the same area and became the leading distributor in Harlem. Graham would later deliver the same results for Pabst in other major black consumer markets throughout the United States. His efforts to promote Pabst among black train porters were so successful that when requesting a beer, passengers were automatically served Pabst unless they specifically requested another brand.

Graham's efforts were reported in the publications of the alcoholic beverage trade and in that of the advertising and marketing press. Hence Graham brought to his agency the proven capacity to increase a company's profit margin among black consumers. In addition, after founding his agency, Graham retained responsibility for Pabst's marketing efforts among black consumers—meaning that the firm, unlike other black-owned agencies, had at least one major account that it could look to for revenue. The presence of the Pabst account also gave him a base from which to approach other major companies interested in the black consumer market. Furthermore, the company periodically distributed News of the Negro Market, as a promotional piece for its marketing efforts. Also, Graham's proven success in increasing the bottom line allowed him to charge fees more on the level of those charged by mainstream agencies.

Graham's agency was also solely responsible for the promotion of a major product, Joe Louis Punch. The beverage was Graham's idea, and he succeeding in getting Joe Louis and an number of others, including musicians Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway, to finance the venture. The marketing design
for the drink was to have Louis, the most popular black athlete of the period, as the sole figure in the advertisements testifying to its quality. Also, Ellington and Calloway wrote a theme song for the beverage to be played on black radio programs. Graham used the combined efforts of the three men, along with his own marketing acumen, to promote Joe Louis Punch in the US and around the world through radio, newspaper, magazine, and billboard advertisements. Graham's marketing efforts succeeding in making Joe Louis Punch a leading beverage in the black community. Furthermore, its success only served to increase the visibility and client base of the William B. Graham agency.56

Graham's success showed that survival as a black-owned agency required more than perceived expertise on the black consumer market. Further, it required more than the ability to provide full agency services as the Brandford agency did. Instead, success as a black-owned agency required the aforementioned expertise, along with the presence of major clients and, most important, the proven capacity to increase a client's bottom line. The Graham agency had these qualities in abundant supply, but it was also the only agency that had a real opportunity to prove its services to major clients. Other black-owned agencies of the decade were forced to compete over the limited roster of local clients interested in black consumers.

Although a number of other black-owned advertising agencies emerged in the 1940s, they remained small and the mainstream advertising industry took little note of their presence. In the nation as a whole, black-owned advertising, outside the Graham agency, had only a very small place. In fact, outside of the
advertising trade press, mainstream agencies took little notice even of the black consumer market. This is exhibited by the near refusal of advertising agencies to place their client’s ads in *Ebony* magazine even after its verified circulation numbers exceeded 300,000 issues per copy. Instead of changing the way in which they approached black consumers, advertising executives and copywriters continued to practice business as usual toward black consumers. Though consumer pressure and the presence of black marketing representatives was leading to the elimination of the most derogatory depictions of blacks, advertisements yet did not portray realistic black consumers. However, prior to the end of World War Two some people openly rejected advertising’s depiction of black consumers and challenged the industry to become more representative of the nation’s populace.

*Pressure on the Advertising Industry*

In 1944—the same year as the publication of Gunnar Myrdal’s landmark study *An American Dilemma*—a group of writers, the Writers’ War Board, commissioned a study. Members of the group were convinced that the mass media’s depictions of minority groups unnecessarily fostered prejudice and discrimination. The group asked the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University to examine the nation’s mass media and assess the differences in how white, Anglo Saxon Protestants were depicted compared with minority groups. The results indicated that the mass media (including magazines, newspapers, advertisements, and radio) perpetuated "the false and mischievous notion that ours is a white, Protestant Anglo-Saxon country in which
all the other racial stocks and religious faiths are of lesser dignity.” While all of
the mass media were found guilty of these offenses, the advertising industry was
considered especially guilty. The Writer’s War Board distributed the results of
the study throughout the nation’s mass media, and its conclusions were also
reported in the advertising trade press.57

Some, like social critic Walter Christmas, looked at the report and the
responses of those in the advertising industry that challenged its conclusions, as
evidence that the effort to exclude and demean blacks in ads was deliberate. In
an article entitled “Negroes in the Ads,” Christmas provided evidence from
commercial artists in the industry of incidents when black were painted out of
pictures or occasions when ads in which black were depicted were not used in
the final campaign. Christmas bluntly labeled the advertising industry “anti-
Negro.” Some agency representative responded to the Writers report and to
Christmas’ critiques un-apologetically. Said one adman: “You’d lose your
audience if a colored man appeared in the ad. However, in a picture of the Old
South, whiskey ads and so forth one puts in an Uncle Tom for atmosphere.”58
While advertisers may have reasonably argued that they feared losing their client
base through the depiction of black consumers, members of the industry were
undoubtedly actively continuing to exclude black consumers except in their
presentation as servants.59

Shortly after the end of the war, when some whites began to criticize the
advertising industry for its depiction of blacks, a similar criticism arose in
segments of the black community. In 1947, the Committee for the Negro in the
Arts (CNA) attacked advertising for its “denial of the Negro’s proportionate existence in our society.” The group insisted that the industry needed to begin to depict blacks in normal everyday situations in order to help them gain acceptance in the United States.\textsuperscript{60}

In the wake of CNA criticism, the National Negro Congress (NNC), a group founded in order to centralize the fight for racial equality, took measures a step further. In 1947 the organization launched a campaign to not only change the way in which blacks were presented in ads, but also to increase their presence in the advertising industry. In its campaign the NNC employed the Biow Company to make a cursory study of the number of blacks employed “in other than a menial capacity” within the industry. The group wanted more than the number of black janitor’s cleaning buildings on Madison Avenue, but, instead the number of black secretary’s, artists, copywriters, and musicians. The Biow study found only nine agencies who fit the NNC employment criteria: Chernow, Alber Frank-Guenther Law, Grey Advertising, Duane Jones, McCann-Erickson, Redfield-Johnstone, Sterling Advertising, J.D. Tarcher and Company, and Young & Rubicam. In over 300 agencies, employing in excess of 20,000 people, the informal survey showed fewer than 40 African-Americans. In order to increase this number, the NNC proposed to establish a placement service for blacks interested in the advertising industry; to set up a training program for blacks to gain experience in advertising; to publicize the advertising industry as a viable career for African-Americans; to maintain public pressure on the advertising industry to prevent discrimination; and to establish a code of fair practices for the
industry. The NNC proposed nothing less than making the industry more inclusive of African-Americans and reflective of the nation's population. Unfortunately, the advertising industry's resistance to change and outside pressure, combined with the pressure on the NNC during the Second Red Scare of the 1950s, limited the group's efforts. Not until the 1960s would public pressure on the advertising industry to be more inclusive yielded significant results.\textsuperscript{61}

**Conclusion**

By the end of the 1940s, black newspapers had achieved marginal success in soliciting advertisements for their pages. Yet even more important than increased advertising lineage, was the fact that some corporate executives were displaying more than passive interest in the black consumer market. While the black press would receive the lion's share of the rewards from that interest, it resulted in opportunities for publishers of black magazines such as *Ebony* and for African-American experts on the black consumer market. These experts now found a growing niche for their services that at one point had not existed.

The end of the 1940s also saw the beginnings of a split among advocates of the black consumer market. On the one hand, black publishers and their advertising representatives had long argued that a campaign to black consumers simply required the placement of ads in the black press. There was no presumed need to change ads for the black press, rather one could use the same ad in the black press as one did in mainstream newspapers. On the other hand, black marketing experts and advertising agency owners, in seeking
support for their own services, began to argue that one not only had to place ads where blacks could see them, but also to prepare special advertising copy that "spoke" to black consumers. In the coming decades it would be the advocates of the need for "special appeal" that dominated the discourse on the black consumer market.

In *The Making of Modern Advertising*, historian Daniel Pope noted that the needs of business determined the course of the advertising industry. In the case of the black consumer market, however, much of the advertising industry refused to follow the dictates of business. Segments of the business community in the 1940s, in the search for markets, recognized the potential of the black consumer market while their advertisers lagged behind. John H. Johnson succeeded in getting ads for *Ebony* magazine but it was only through direct appeal to corporate executives; he was forced to bypass advertisers. But Johnson, recognized expert though he was, could not appeal directly to every corporate executive in America on behalf of the black consumer market. Instead, as Johnson himself recognized, "the Negro market will never be completely sold if the country's 2,300 advertising agencies are not convinced of its potential." Only when the advertising community had the necessary statistics on black consumers, the means to reach them, and the presence of blacks to guide it, would the black consumer market reach the fullest expression.

Furthermore, only when the advertising industry fully recognized the black consumer market would mainstream agencies began to employ more African-Americans. However, the presence of blacks in the industry would come from
pressure outside the industry rather than within. Changes in the industry would come from the pressure of black consumers and from black marketing and advertising men eager for both employment and for changes in the way the industry depicted African-Americans. There were some blacks in mainstream agencies and some black-owned agencies in the 1940s, but they lacked the power to force conclusive changes on the industry. However, the number of blacks in the advertising industry increased exponentially with the industry's increased recognition of the black consumer market, a process that would begin in the 1950s.\textsuperscript{64}
Notes


4 Barnett, 9.


7 Letter from the Associated Publishers Representative, 1928, Barnett Papers, Box 131, Folder 6.


10 Barnett to James H. Kerns, Milwaukee Urban League, July 30, 1929; Barnett to J.B. Bass, publisher of the *California Eagle*, Barnett Papers, Box 131, Folder 6.

11 Robert Balderston to Claude Barnett, July 6, 1931, Barnett Papers, Box 132, Folder 1.

12 Ralph Butler (vice-president of advertising for General Foods) to Claude Barnett, June 15, 1931, Barnett Papers, Box 132, Folder 2.


18 The belief that being a member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations would not increase advertising revenue was born out in later decades. Black-owned newspapers that had verified circulation rates very often saw no greater advertising revenue than those who did not.


22 Claude A. Barnett to F.B. Ransom, January 24, 1929, Box 262, Folder 4, F.B. Ransom to Claude A. Barnett, January 29, 1929, Barnett Papers, Box 262, Folder 4.


26 On organization of Interstate United Newspapers see Buni, 223-224, 312-313.

27 Although company literature does not acknowledge the role of black newspaper representation in the history of the firm today the former William B. Ziff company is the publishing giant Ziff-Davis.

28 In addition to the work done by IUN, some black newspapers also would experience a rise in their advertising revenue during World War II due to the excess profits tax. See Mary Alice Sentman and Patrick S. Washburn, “How Excess Profits Tax Brought Ads to Black Newspapers in World War II,” Journalism Quarterly (Winter 1987): 769-774, 867.

30 Ibid., 48.

31 David J. Sullivan, "Don't Do This—If you Want to Sell Your Products to Negroes," *Sales Management* (March 1, 1943): 48, 50.

32 Ibid., 46. On the importance of David Sullivan see Weems, 32-34.


36 William Black had been the advertising director for the *New Jersey Herald News*, the Negro merchandise representative for Gordon Baking Company and had co-founded *Flash* magazine, a short-lived periodical for which he had the responsibility of securing advertising. See: "Flash," *Tide* (April 1, 1937): 34; "Interstate Names Black," *Advertising Age* (February 24, 1941): 6; and Sullivan, "The Negro Market," 62; and "Negro Press," *Tide* (September 1, 1944): 84.


44 Ibid., 15-17; "Advertising Eyes the Negro," *Negro Digest* (May 1947): 82-88; Maurine Christopher, "Advertisers Step Up Negro Market Drives," *Advertising Age* (December 26, 1949): 26-27; and "14 Million Negro Customers," *Negro Digest* (August 1947): 57-61. Line rate costs in black newspapers were often higher because of the increased printing costs black publishers often faced. Black publishers lacked the economies of scale that mainstream newspapers commanded and those costs were passed on to advertisers in the form of higher rates.

45 Pepsi-Cola's special markets division was established in the 1930s with the goal of increasing the company's market share among African-Americans. The firm had gone bankrupt in 1922 and 1932 and at one point company leaders sent inquiries to Coca-Cola executives about purchasing...


47 Burns, 121-126; Johnson and Bennett, *Succeeding Against the Odds*;


50 The American Association of Advertising Agencies was the leading organization in the agency business. The group was founded in 1917 and was made up of member agencies who had petitioned and been elected to membership. The association was recognized both inside and outside the industry as the organizational voice for advertising agencies.

51 Sullivan, "Don't Do This," 48; Sales pamphlet from the Sullivan agency, April 30, 1945, Barnett Papers, Box 131, Folder 2; Fox, 278-279.

52 "Hailstolk, Inc," *Tide* (July 1, 1945): 36, 38; Oak, 117-118.


Hale, 125.


CHAPTER 2 – 1950-1959

Media Advancements and African-American Advertising and Marketing Experts

For those interested in expanding recognition of the African-American market, the 1950s opened with what appeared to be a heavy loss. Charles Luckman, a longtime advocate of extending recognition to black consumers and the African-American market, resigned from chairmanship of Lever Brothers. Lever Brothers was one of the nation's leading advertisers, and many advocates of the black consumer market hoped that Lever policies toward black consumers would lead other firms to pursue similar courses of action. Some feared Luckman's departure would lead the company away from a policy of cultivating the black consumer market. Hence Luckman's exit came as a potentially damaging blow to the recognition of black consumers.1

Fortunately, there were other corporate executives interested in the profits available in the African-American market and in the general marketplace. Corporate expansion, combined with the spread of television, made the 1950s a decade of unprecedented growth in advertising agency billings. By 1957 nine of the top ten agencies had billings in excess of $100 million per year, and a few had billings over $200 million. These figures are put into perspective with the realization that the first agency with billings over $100 million, the J. Walter
Thompson agency, had not reached that mark until 1947. The black consumer market, though often only attracting secondary attention, was swept up into this growth, and advertisers found they had greater opportunities to reach black consumers via magazines and the radio.  

African-Americans interested in public relations, marketing, and advertising used the growing interest in the black consumer market to their advantage. During the 1950s a number of black-owned market consulting firms and advertising firms emerged throughout the nation. These firms gathered research information and worked as consultants with both advertisers and agencies to reach the black consumer market. African-American sociologists and economists also found their services needed, and many conducted in depth studies on the black consumer market.

**Statistics and the Black Consumer Market**

During the 1950s, many American business executives desired to expand the scope of their sales. To do so, some turned to Europe and to developing countries around the globe. Many writers in the sales and advertising press, however, encouraged business leaders to look within the U.S. to the black consumer market, an “untapped market within their midst,” for sales opportunities.

One major issue that plagued companies and advertising agencies interested in the black consumer market was the lack of reliable marketing statistics. Advertisers and agencies accustomed to consulting statistical factors such as population distribution, income, and purchasing habits found few sources
available regarding the black consumer market. Though there had been studies of local groups of black consumers during the 1940s, information about the national picture was lacking. Hence if a company was interested in reaching the national black consumer market, executives would have to rely on statistical estimates rather than concrete figures. Fortunately, the 1950 census promised to contain a number of concrete statistics on the national black consumer market and census figures were eagerly awaited.

In April 1950 Ebony magazine scooped even the leading organs of the advertising and marketing press by publishing a detailed preview of the census report. However, the magazine was not simply guessing at figures. Editors had gained access to Joseph R. Houchins, the head of Negro statistics at the Census Bureau. Houchins had been with the Census for ten years, and his position made him one of the leading African-Americans in the federal government. For that reason alone, editors of Ebony had decided to do a personality feature on him, but, during the course of the interview, the writer discovered the important statistical figures Houchins held. Consequently what was to have been a feature article on Houchins became a five-page summary of census predictions with the feature on Houchins reduced to a few paragraphs. Before publishing the report in Ebony, editors sent the predictions to selected organs of the advertising press.5

From the Ebony report, corporations and agencies learned a number of important facts. The black population had topped 15,000,000, a 16.5 percent increase over 1940. The black population was also increasing at a faster rate
than that of whites as the birth rate increased and death rate decreased. Most importantly, income for blacks had increased nearly threefold since the 1940 census, from $500 per year to over $1,400 per year. The rise in income was accompanied by a rise in African-American homeownership. This was an important category for advertising executives, for home owners were the "purchasing agents" for the consumption needs of family members and for products needed for home maintenance. African-American occupational status had also changed: the percentage of blacks in white-collar occupations had doubled. Figures indicated that blacks were continuing to move into occupations outside that of farmer or common laborer. Statistics also conclusively showed that the distribution of blacks was shifting from the South to the North and from the countryside to the cities. In urban areas like Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, for example, blacks were now 32 percent and 18 percent of the population respectively. Thus if companies hoped to see their products succeed in the major cities, where a majority of all sales were made, they would have to take black consumers into greater account in their advertising campaigns.

The 1950 census was the first of an array of studies on the black consumer market completed throughout the decade. In 1952, the Senate Subcommittee on Labor and Labor Management released data showing that the economic position of blacks had improved. Black workers had shrunk the gap in income between themselves and white workers from 40 percent in 1940 to 52 percent by the early 50s. The number of black professional women had increased, and as they continued to participate in the labor force, the earnings of black families had
grown. These national studies were complemented by a host of local analyses completed by black newspapers and radio stations that targeted black listeners. There were also two book-length studies published in the decade that analyzed the growth of the African-American market. In 1952, Joseph Johnson published *The Potential Negro Market*; his work was followed in 1958 by William K. Bell’s book, *15 Million Negroes and 15 Billion Dollars*. Throughout the decade, members of the advertising industry saw, regardless of the source, numbers indicating that blacks were improving very rapidly their ability to purchase. Furthermore, persons inside and outside the industry used the numbers to argue for increasingly nuanced programs to reach the changing black consumer market.

In the forefront of both research on and reach into the black consumer market was John H. Johnson, publisher of *Ebony* magazine. Johnson’s entry into the research aspects of the African-American market was not limited to his staff at *Ebony* scooping the census report. Instead, Johnson continued to increase his information on the black consumer market and publish results in his four magazines: *Ebony, Jet, Tan,* and *Negro Digest.* In 1950 *Ebony* published what became the first of several studies of black consumers. Through a survey of 1,245 *Ebony* readers (622 men and 623 women) located throughout the country, editors estimated the brand preferences of black consumers. The survey illustrated that rather than being interested only in low cost products, blacks purchased higher-priced items when possible. This and other brand preference surveys conducted by the magazine were paramount in shifting the conception
that the black customers simply went for the cheapest items. As one researcher concluded, "the Negro market is often underrated by advertisers." Therefore, advertisers could direct a variety of their products to black consumers and expect to achieve sales regardless of the product’s cost.\(^6\)

Studies also showed that the purchasing decisions of blacks were not typical of other racial groups at a similar income level. Instead, blacks made purchasing decisions based on different factors than mainstream consumers and that their buying habits differed as well. Therefore, appeals that worked with mainstream consumers did not work with black consumers. For example, advertisers could not use the lure of vacation trips among blacks as effectively as among whites because racial discrimination prevented blacks from traveling freely. Surveys also indicated that blacks preferred to see black models used in advertisements directed at them. These, and surveys done by *Ebony*, legitimized the arguments of those who said that black consumers could not be reached with the same appeals that reached mainstream consumers.\(^9\)

*Ebony*’s pathbreaking research information on black consumers, combined with its circulation numbers, launched Johnson’s publishing company on the way to becoming the dominant publishing force in the black consumer market. Interstate United Newspapers share of the market dwindled and in 1954 the firm was sold and ceased to be a competitive factor.\(^10\) The Associated Publishers involvement with the African-American market continued, but the firm’s fortunes dwindled with those of the black newspaper establishment. Throughout the decade, black newspaper publishers witnessed a continued loss of circulation.
numbers. As the fortunes of black newspapers declined, Johnson's role as an expert on black consumers grew. He appeared at numerous marketing and advertising conferences and wrote several articles for industry trade journals. Johnson often structured his pieces in the trade press around a series of do's and don'ts for reaching the black consumer. Johnson also had his staff create informational brochures on the black consumer market that performed the dual function of providing information on the market and promoting *Ebony* as the vehicle to reach its members. The magazine's editors also created a film, "The Secret of Selling the Negro," that was shown to sales groups, corporations and advertising agencies. Furthermore, in 1954 Johnson inaugurated a program complete with films on selling to blacks and he sent out lists of marketing representatives available to consult with those interested in reaching black consumers, and the results from research and readership surveys. Advertisements for *Ebony* printed in trade journals trumpeted the magazine as the central organ for research on and entry into the African-American market.

*Ebony* magazine was also an advertiser favorite because research showed that readers of the organ were a lucrative target market among black consumers. Statistics showed that over 25 percent of *Ebony* readers earned over $4,000 per year (the median income for whites was just over $3,000 per year), 36 percent owned their homes, 40 percent owned new cars, 23 percent owned televisions, and 27 percent had been to college. Therefore, advertisers and agencies believed that *Ebony* readers had the disposable income that made them good
consumers. Advertisers and agencies responded by placing advertisements in Ebony in numbers unprecedented for a black-oriented publication.\textsuperscript{13}

*Ebony* also gave advertisers and agencies access to at least some of the research they wanted on black consumers. The circulation figures of the magazine also provided clear evidence that it could be used to reach African-Americans. The combination of the two factors, research and circulation numbers, gave Johnson something other publishers lacked—authority. In the span of 10 years Johnson had transformed a $500 investment into a publishing empire with advertising revenues approaching $10 million per year. Johnson had also successfully placed his publishing group, which continued to be comprised of *Ebony, Negro World, Tan*, and *Jet* magazines, near the center of the growing urban black consumer market.

Johnson’s position as the leader in the black publishing arena was enhanced by a September 1952 report published in *Jet* magazine entitled, “Circulation and Cost Comparison, Negro Newspapers and Magazines.” The report compared the advertising cost and circulation numbers of various black-owned newspapers with the four magazines controlled by Johnson Publishing. It was reprinted in the trade press and characterized by *Advertising Age* as a “slashing attack” that indicated that the cooperative spirit that once existed among black publishers was “now headed for the ashcan.” The author of the *Jet* report argued that the circulation numbers of black-owned newspapers had declined almost 20 percent since 1947 while the cost of advertising in them had increased over 20 percent. Unlike black newspapers, though, black magazines had experienced positive
growth. The report illustrated that the cost of comparative advertising (based on lineage and page estimates) in black magazines versus newspapers was $3,000 versus $10,000 respectively. The report also emphasized that black reading preferences were changing: more blacks read magazines than did newspapers. The total circulation numbers of audited black newspapers was 809,032 as compared to 1,250,000 for the four Johnson magazines. The Jet report allowed that in cities with 100,000 or more African-Americans, the circulation rate of the leading black paper exceeded that of any one of the four magazines, but it was dwarfed by their combined circulation. Defending the figures as “impartial,” the author of the report declared, “Markets cannot be profitably expanded in terms of increased sales, when at additional cost, media coverage shrinks.” Furthermore, he forecast that over the long-range the overall circulation numbers of black newspapers would continue to decline.14

The Jet report, and the interpretation of the results by Advertising Age, did not go unnoticed by black publishers, including Johnson. One week after the report was re-publicized in Advertising Age Johnson sent a letter to the editor that appears to have been little more than damage control. Johnson argued that the report was not meant to be an attack on black newspapers but an impartial report of the facts. Also, contrary to the Advertising Age interpretation, cooperation between black magazine and newspaper publishers was “functioning at its highest and most effective level.” He asserted that staff members at his company continued to recommend black newspapers as advertising vehicles and that black newspapers did the same for his magazines. Hence, the cooperative
spirit was far from dead as all members of the black publishing arena were working together “to obtain the proper recognition of the multi-billion dollar Negro market among advertisers.”

Nonetheless, while Johnson characterized the Jet report as “routine,” representatives of black newspapers were not as charitable. Instead, D. Arnett Murphy, head of Associated Publishers, and Earl V. Hord, general manager of the Pittsburgh Courier, wrote letters to Advertising Age vehemently disagreeing with the Jet report and Johnson’s claim of impartiality. Both men argued that the author of the report had deliberately misstated the facts on the circulation of black newspapers. Murphy conceded that the circulation numbers of the black press had declined, but he argued that the long-term trend was one of increase. He also reasoned that the actual penetration of the four Johnson magazines into the black community was not as great as their circulation numbers indicated. Instead the “hidden factor” was that the four magazines had a high degree of white readers. Therefore the magazines were not as powerful a tool to reach into the black community as the Jet report had presented. Murphy also pointed out that the seeming contradiction in that the Jet report had criticized the sales power of black newspapers but that Johnson Publishing continued to advertise in them. Therefore either Johnson was wasting his money in an ineffective sales medium, or the sales power of black newspapers was greater than the report allowed.

Both Murphy and Hord criticized editors at Advertising Age for accepting the report at face value and for creating a negative impression of black newspapers that would cause “serious and costly damage” to the black press.
As the decade continued, and the circulation numbers of black newspapers continued to decline, it became clear that the *Jet* report was correct. The era of black newspapers as an advertising medium for national products was ending. Black-owned newspapers increasingly found themselves outside of advertising programs as agencies looked to reach the black consumer market through radio and magazines. Despite Johnson's claims to the contrary the *Jet* report was far from routine. It was, as Murphy and Hord recognized, a direct attack upon black newspapers as a sales vehicle to the black consumers. Johnson and his staff recognized that advertisers and agencies often spent only secondary money in the black consumer market, reserving primary funds for the mainstream marketplace. Since the dollars available to the black media were limited, the *Jet* report was an effort to ensure that the lion's share of those secondary dollars went to Johnson publishing.¹⁷

This public disagreement between leading figures of the black publishing arena was indicative of the tremendous growth of the black consumer market in just a few years. In the 1940s, when black publishers were fighting for only a few advertising dollars with no single entity receiving a large amount, amicable relations existed. When the available dollars began to stretch into the millions, however, what had once been an genial, if not cooperative, effort to generate interest in the Black consumer market disappeared. The advertising money available in the 1950s turned a once amicable effort into one in which the spirit of competition overcame that of cooperation.¹⁸

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Trade Journals and the Black Consumer Market

By the middle of the 1950s, editors in all of the major organs of the advertising trade press had published at least one article lauding the profit opportunities in the Black consumer market. Their attention on the Black consumer market was important because it was the trade press that kept the black consumer in front of agency executives. Advertising Age often contained important findings and events relative to black consumers. Likewise Printer's Ink reported on the market and beginning in 1957 added a section on the Black consumer market in an annual "Advertisers Guide to Marketing." Tide magazine did repeated features on the black consumer market along with interviews with key experts. Sponsor, a periodical devoted to advertising on radio, provided intensive studies of the black consumer market every year beginning in 1952. Yet although each of the major organs devoted intermittent attention to the black consumer market, the most extensive attention came from Tide and Sponsor.

Tide was the first of the major journals to note a shift in attitude about the black consumer market among advertisers and agencies. In 1951 the magazine carried a cover story on the African-American consumer market. On the first page of the story was a breakout box with the heading "Changing Views on the Market." Within this box was part of a memorandum from one of the reporters who had done research for story. The reporter noted that people were much more interested in the black consumer market than they had been when a similar story had been done in 1947. She stated:

I want you to know [also], how very anxious a number of important people here are to see a story that doesn't just recite market data and media
claims and advertisers' campaigns. They hope it will reflect what they believe to be a new, fair, mutually respectful attitude between their own organizations and Negro media people. They seem to feel that the buyers and sellers are learning to deal with each other without prejudice—and that the sooner everybody on both sides achieves a fair, objective viewpoint, the sooner an important, neglected potential in advertising can be developed.¹⁹

Although it would be a number of years before the optimistic shift in attitude that the reporter articulated was more widespread in the industry it is nonetheless important. This increased interest in the black consumer market was an important step in opening the door to more African-American advertising practitioners. As more advertisers and agencies targeted black consumers, executives began to recognize just how little they knew about blacks, and they looked for experts to guide them.

Reporters for Sponsor also found a shift in attitude among their respondents similar to that described by Tide analysts. In 1949, Sponsor had published a two-part article entitled "The Forgotten 15,000,000" that described the overlooked black consumer market. Three years later, editors went back to reexamine the black consumer market, and they found that corporations and agencies were now greatly interested and involved with market development efforts. Beginning in 1952, Sponsor began publishing an extensive section on Negro radio and the black consumer market. This special section contained information from local market studies, interviews with experts on selling to blacks, and the results of advertising campaigns (local and national) directed towards black consumers. In the late 1950s, as evidence of the growth of the market, the section was expanded to a full issue that provided even more extensive coverage.
Not only did advertising executives find themselves armed with the increased information on the African-American consumer market they sought, but that information was delivered through the trade press on a consistent basis. By the late 1950s, the size and scope of the black consumer market was something that executives of most major advertising agencies were aware of. Madeleine Allison, media director of Herschel Z. Deutsch Advertising, noted, "After all the enthusiastic articles and impressive statistics with which advertisers and agencies have been barraged, I doubt whether anyone today questions the value of the Negro market." Along with black magazines like Ebony, the medium through which advertisers reached out to the growing Negro market was radio.

**Negro Radio**

While members of the black publishing arena argued over the effectiveness of magazines over newspapers in reaching black consumers, the area of black-oriented radio, or Negro radio, grew tremendously. In late 1949, Edgar Steele of the Research Company of America released the results of a study of black radio ownership. Steele's results showed that in most major cities, African-American radio ownership approached 90 percent saturation. Furthermore, of those blacks who did not currently own radios significant numbers planned to buy them in the future. Thus radio was a medium that could potentially reach more blacks than either newspapers or magazines.

Advertisers and agencies were told by writers in the trade press and radio company executives that when they used radio they were "tying in with tremendous psychological forces" that attracted blacks. Radio, executives
argued, provided a more intimate way to speak to black consumers because
rather than "selling from the outside looking in, [the] message is coming from
within the community." Furthermore, "because he has always felt discriminated
against, the very fact that a station removes some of the feeling of discrimination
by 'talking' directly to him is almost enough to guarantee that he will spend his
money on the products and services advertised on that station." Thus simply
placing an ad on a Negro radio program was viewed as enough to guarantee
sales because it implied recognition of the market and its people. 22

Advertisers also learned that their employment patterns were becoming an
important part of enhancing their sales campaigns to black consumers. While
substantive changes in corporate employment would not happen until the 1960s,
the use of black deejays gave the impression that an advertiser had black
employees. This was an important public relations tool because as the decade
wore on, blacks were increasingly willing to use the economic power of boycotts
against companies that practiced racial discrimination. 23

Beginning in the early 1950s, Negro radio expanded from a little known to a
widely recognized vehicle to reach black consumers. One advertising executive
recalled how little was known about the medium in the 1940s: "One of our
biggest food accounts was worried because sales had slipped and their overall
share of the market was down. All afternoon we discussed ways and means of
reaching every possible segment of U.S. housewives. Finally, I suggested: 'Why
don't we buy some Negro radio as part of the campaign?' I can still remember
the blank looks I got." 24 This executive's experience could have been duplicated
in any number of agencies during the 1940s. During the 40s, few stations aimed any significant amount of programming at blacks. By the mid-1950s, however, over 400 stations directed at least part of their daily programming toward black listeners. Also, over 100 major advertisers had begun using black-oriented radio in large amounts, and the National Negro Network, a vehicle offering national programming to blacks, had been established.25

Negro radio was able to grow so quickly in a short span of time because executives and sales personnel in the industry built upon the foundation established by black publishers. They were able to draw upon nearly two decades of work by black publishers in establishing the importance of the black consumer market to corporate sales, work that had begun to bear fruit. This information, combined with the prosperity generated by World War Two, allowed Negro radio, as a more far-reaching communications tool, quickly to eclipse much of the black publishing establishment. Additionally, buyers of Negro radio time learned that a small investment yielded large returns in the marketplace. Many stations that programmed to blacks offered sales and marketing guidance for products. When followed, this guidance allowed companies seeking to reach black consumers to avoid some of the damaging faux pas that had been experienced with some ads in black newspapers. Hence to an extent black deejays and radio executives can be considered the forerunners of the numerous "special markets" experts who proliferated in the 1950s. Stations programming to black listeners also engaged in extra merchandising efforts to aid sales campaigns including: deejay apperances at stores, setting up product displays,
sending out promotional items to stores, contacting store owners to maintain the relationship between the merchant and the product company. This extra effort often resulted in higher product sales and it increased the possibility that agencies would use their stations again in the future.26

Stations active in Negro radio provided advertising agencies with the research numbers they required. Numerous black-oriented radio stations did local studies of black consumers, and they supplied agencies with population, income, and brand preference information. Although many in the advertising industry desired more complex statistics regarding the national black consumer market, these local studies helped to develop the picture. The information available about various local markets provided a summary of radio's success in stimulating purchases by black consumers. Most black newspaper publishers had provided only limited research studies of their own circulations and sales potential. Stations programming to black listeners, however provided hard sales numbers that agencies desired. Therefore agencies had specific figures to utilize when deciding exactly how to target black consumers through the radio.27

Although there continued to be a variety of local studies of various black consumer markets, agencies always wanted more information. Agencies accustomed to stations with network-level programming to mainstream consumers also wanted access to network-level programming for black consumers, but for years no such vehicle existed. In 1954, however, the National Negro Network (NNN) was organized to meet this need, and many persons active in the industry hailed it as the mark of Negro radio crossing "the
last big frontier." The NNN was the first opportunity for agencies to buy both network-level advertising and to have access to spot purchasing throughout the country.\textsuperscript{28}

Leonard Evans, a black account supervisor for Arthur Meyerhoff & Company, was well acquainted with some of the criticisms of Negro radio. Evans knew that the single largest complaint among agencies regarding the medium was that it was not possible to reach black consumers across the country with the same programming. The NNN was Evans' response to this problem. The network consisted of 45 stations around the nation that Evans surmised reached 12,000,000 of the projected 15,000,000 African-Americans. Evans began the network with a soap opera, the Ruby Valentine Show. The show was sponsored by Philip Morris and the Pet Milk company, two "blue chip" accounts. Some questioned why the NNN began its programming with a soap opera rather than something more prestigious like a concert or a play. Evans and others made it clear, though, that a soap opera was the vehicle to attract the attention of black consumers. In working to have a soap opera lead the way rather than another sort of programming, Evans illustrated the importance of having black experts designing campaigns to reach black consumers.\textsuperscript{29}

Evans had been active in the black consumer market for a number of years and had some idea of what was currently popular among black consumers. He designed the Ruby Valentine show with blues and spiritual music and with characters blacks could identify with, something that did not occur on mainstream programs. Also, the soap opera was already a type of program with
which advertisers were familiar, and it was a means to reach a market they were interested in but unfamiliar with. The success of the program was recognized when Pet Milk and Philip Morris reported a “noticeable effect” and increased sales in areas where the program was aired.\textsuperscript{30}

Curiously, given Evans' experience as a marketing and advertising expert on black consumers, he did not have any involvement in writing the commercials that appeared on the NNN. Instead the NNN consulted with advertisers only when executives had problems orienting their copy to black consumers. Evans' focus was clearly upon building the network into an organization of importance, not extending his reach into the advertising realm. Ironically, it would be within the advertising realm that the network faced its greatest problems. As Evans noted:

\begin{quote}
Most of our inquiries come directly from clients who have heard about NNN through their field representatives or regional sales offices. Agencies are aware of our existence and watch our growth closely, but a lot of them are still reluctant to come right out and make a major recommendation on Negro radio, preferring to keep campaigns at a ‘test’ level while watching to see what others do.\textsuperscript{31}
\end{quote}

Evans faced the same problem building the NNN that Johnson had faced when building \textit{Ebony} magazine—difficulty in securing interest from advertising agencies. Just as Johnson was forced to bypass agencies and appeal to corporate executives for ads, Evans found agencies wary of recommending his organization to clients. It was the lack of consistent sponsor support that doomed the fledgling network. After little more than a year, the network was disbanded.\textsuperscript{32} However, the idea of network-level buying did not die with the NNN. Instead a number of broadcasting groups, the largest containing over 300
stations at least partially programming to blacks, picked up where the NNN had left off. By the end of the 1950s, advertisers and agencies had access to the national black consumer market across the radio waves.33

Despite the presence of some national networks, however, much of the success of Negro radio remained on the local level. While the number of stations programming to blacks increased the medium struggled with securing a large number of major advertisers. Even with the presence of network organizations, such as Keystone Broadcasting System, a grouping of affiliates located primarily in the South, the medium had difficulty securing attention. The Keystone network was a small grouping of stations in the urban Northeast but This difficulty did not escape the attention of the editors of Sponsor who conducted a series of investigations on the resistance t of advertising agencies to recommend Negro radio.34

In 1955 Sponsor conducted a survey among the nation's leading admen. While the names of the respondents were withheld, the author of the report noted that those included in the survey controlled over $160 million per year in radio-TV billings. The report stated that even though opinions differed on the actual sales results available from the black consumer market the size and importance of the market was recognized. Reasons for not increasing the use of Negro radio varied, but the most common reason was the lack of research numbers. While it was true that statistics were available for a variety of local markets, the picture of the national black consumer market was largely in the realm of estimates or based on data from the 1950 census. One executive maintained that his
research showed that there were differences in the buying habits of blacks and whites, but that he was unsure how Negro radio could be used to influence purchasing choices. Also, there was little programming available that allowed for several markets to be targeted with one sales campaign. Instead, there were few national programming options. Agencies had to approach each station on a local basis, and though success could be found in this manner, the time required was considerably more than that needed to reach the general market. Therefore, many agencies did not recommend the use of Negro radio to their clients. The author of the Sponsor report concluded that although some agency complaints were valid, the rewards available through Negro radio were worth the work and outweighed the risks.35

As advertisers sought to reach the black consumer market through the radio, the picture of black consumers became even more nuanced. Advertisers learned that their ads needed to be even more carefully conceived than those appearing in print or they risked alienating or offending black consumers. Executives learned that some products, despite their popularity among blacks, could not be advertised on radio. For example, advertisements for hair straightening products or skin bleaching creams could not be placed on Negro radio without offending blacks. While these products were regularly advertised in black newspapers and magazines, placing them on radio would allow whites to hear the ads as well as blacks. In a black newspaper or magazine the numbers of white readers was negligible, so the eyes reading the advertisement were almost assuredly black and there was no fear of embarrassment. Placing them on radio for all to hear,
though, might confirm for some whites what they suspected—that blacks really wanted to be white. This was an image-damaging affront that blacks would not accept and makers of these products obliged by not placing ads for their products on radio.36

In the world of radio, advertisers were able to speak to consumers in a way that could not be duplicated in the static world of print. Therefore, since radio provided a more intimate setting, agency executives learned that they could not speak to black consumers in the manner in which they spoke to those in the general market. Led initially by radio deejays and executives, agencies learned that it was better to have a black deejay read their copy rather than have a white person do so. One executive noted, “To a great degree their speech is idiomatic to the extent that nobody sells the Negro like a Negro who knows how to sell.” Agencies also learned that they could not use the same copy in the black consumer market as they did in the general market. Few went as far as the advertising personnel of one drug firm who planned to advertise a product with the pitch of: “Attention Negro women! Now you can have hair that’s just as attractive as that of white ladies.”37 The station that the ad was submitted to recognized that the copy was ill thought and refused to accept it. Station managers also counseled the advertiser that if they wanted to attract rather than repel black consumers, they needed to change the copy.

The increasing number of requests for the alteration of copy for the African-American market and the proposed solution illustrates an important shift. For years, black publishers like Johnson had argued that there was no need to
change copy from the general to the black consumer market, simply placing ads where blacks could see them was enough. As the method of reaching black consumers became more intimate and complex, however, it quickly became clear than advertisers could not speak to white and black consumers in the same manner. Instead agencies learned that they had to be familiar with the intricacies of the lives of blacks in order to reach into their homes and sell their products to them.

Admen interested in using Negro radio were repeatedly advised to get the advice of black experts on marketing to blacks. This was an admitted reversal of the traditional relationship in which agencies usually knew more about what would sell a group of consumers than anyone else. For the black consumer market, this truism was not valid, for in this relationship the agencies were the ones who lacked the knowledge and needed education. It was this need for a new level of knowledge in reaching black consumers, especially through the radio, that opened up opportunities for blacks to enter the advertising field and other related industries. Hence a number of blacks began to proliferate as “special markets” experts who acted as consultants for advertisers and agencies involved in the black consumer market.

*The National Association of Market Developers*

The proliferation of journal articles on the use of black consultants to reach black consumers helped to directly increase the employment of blacks in advertising and public relations. In 1953, five black men who worked in these fields met while attending a career fair at Tennessee State University, and
discussions led them to the consensus that some type of organization was needed to promote the black consumer market. The result of their deliberations was National Association of Market Developers (NAMD). The NAMD would become the central organization through which blacks active in public relations, marketing, and advertising would promote the black consumer market. Although the group was the effort of five men, one was recognized as the catalyst behind the effort—Moss Kendrix. Organization co-founder H. Naylor Fitzhugh later recalled, "Without Moss Kendrix there would not have been an NAMD because he supported the organization by supplying the needed resources."^38

Prior to helping organize the NAMD, Moss Kendrix had worked in a variety of capacities within government and journalism. In 1946 Kendrix approached Coca-Cola with a proposal to promote Coke sales to black consumers. Although Coke turned down Kendrix's initial proposal, in part because wartime restrictions on production and material supply had not been lifted, an important relationship was formed that Kendrix would tap in the future.^39

In 1948, Kendrix founded a public relations firm in Washington D.C., the Moss H. Kendrix Organization, specializing in promoting sales to black consumers. He spent the next few years on a variety of intermittent public relations contracts, but opportunities to develop the black consumer market eluded him. By the early 1950s, however, the contacts that he had made at Coca-Cola years earlier began to bear fruit. Executives at Coca-Cola, the soft drink industry leader, recognized the gains that Pepsi had made through the black consumer market and sought to expand company efforts in that arena. In his new proposal to
company officials, Kendrix convinced them that sales messages had to be directed specially to blacks and that he had the unique expertise to do so. Kendrix spent the next two decades steering the company through potential racial conflicts, training an African-American sales staff, and successfully promoting Coke products to black consumers around the country.\textsuperscript{40}

In addition to working with Coca-Cola, Kendrix did consultation work for the Carnation Company and a host of civic organizations. Contacts that he had made while working in the government and in journalism, combined with his efforts in public relations, provided him with a broad network within which to promote the black consumer market. His contacts also made him one of the recognized leaders of his field. The author of one article enthused, "it cannot be gainsaid that much of the advertising, merchandising and goodwill which is exchanged between the Negro market and industry today stems from the activity and influence of Moss Kendrix in the field."\textsuperscript{41} Thus with a broad public relations network and the financial wherewithal from his company, Moss Kendrix was uniquely qualified to lead the creation of the NAMD.

In some ways the NAMD was formed out of frustration. Many black marketing and public relations professionals found that they were often left outside of company marketing and training programs. Early NAMD member Chuck Smith recalled:

You weren't a part of anything real within the company marketing program or organization. You didn't participate in the meetings where they would discuss what's going on and what the new strategies were... I don't think many of those company managers really gave a damn about anything more than the fact that they were going to have somebody out there identified with the Negro market.\textsuperscript{42}
The NAMD was a response to this frustration expressed by some black communicators. Within the NAMD, blacks could find access to the training and networking opportunities that they did not get from their employers. The group also was designed to provide a sort of support organization for blacks in communications fields. Until the mid-1960s, blacks in public relations, marketing, and advertising found the NAMD to be their only consistent source of networking and training in new marketing techniques. Therefore attendance at NAMD conventions often included virtually all of the persons active in the black consumer market.43

The NAMD was also formed to provide a focus point for young blacks interested in the fields of advertising, marketing, or public relations. Moss Kendrix believed that the black consumer market contained opportunities for unheard-of advancement for blacks looking outside the traditional areas of the law, medicine, or education. The leaders of the nation's black colleges who offered their support to the members of the organization and their goals shared this belief. The presidents of Howard University and Tennessee State University opened their school facilities to the NAMD on repeated occasions for conventions and marketing clinics. School officials also worked with the organization to help graduates make the transition from college life to the professional ranks.44

The organization's activities were also welcomed by many of America's corporate leaders. Executives from some of the nation's largest corporations often delivered keynote speeches or sat on panels at NAMD conventions.
Corporate leaders found that the NAMD and its members gave them greater access to the black consumer market, and they responded by supporting NAMD activities.45

The formation of the NAMD also led to a shift in the manner used to approach black consumers. The workshops that were organized at yearly conventions had panelists who analyzed the black consumer market and sought more creative ways to reach black consumers. Many of the techniques advocated during these workshops were later used in efforts to reach black consumers and would supplant traditional efforts.46

For years, Johnson and other black publishers had articulated the traditional approach to the African-American consumer market. Johnson and other publishers had told advertisers and agencies that they simply need place their ads in black media to receive the patronage of black consumers. Johnson told advertisers that "the fact that you're in a Negro publication is enough to inspire loyalty."47 He argued that there was no need to create special advertising copy or to use black models in except in scenes representing a family. Like their counterparts in Negro radio, members of in the NAMD, however, counseled the use of black models throughout advertisements directed at blacks. In addition that advocated the creation of special "appeals" that "spoke" to black consumers. Blacks, they reasoned, were more likely to purchase products when they felt that they were appreciated for their patronage. Furthermore, black advertising and
marketing experts continually emphasized that they were the ones with the expertise necessary to create the ads and position the products for maximum appeal in the black consumer market.48

Before the formation of the NAMD many of the articles published on black consumers contained lists of do's and don'ts for reaching the black consumer market. These lists rarely (if ever) mentioned the need to secure expertise from black consultants before initiating a campaign among black consumers. When readers were counseled to secure the expertise of consultants, the prospective consultant was non-racial in character. Or, writers in the trade press spoke to securing guidance from deejays or radio personnel rather than specifically from a black marketing or advertising practitioner. As articles from members of the NAMD began appearing in the trade press, however, securing advice from black consultants was often listed as the number one thing to do when organizing a sales campaign.

In 1955, Paul K. Edwards, head of the Department of Marketing at Rutgers University, spoke before the Merchandising Executives Club (MEC). The MEC was an interracial organization made up of "persons of the executive level who have an active interest in the Negro market." While no membership list for the group is available, representatives from major advertisers, publishing organizations, and advertising agencies attended the group meetings. Edwards, who had worked since the 1930s to generate interest in the black consumer market, argued that using black consultants was necessary to run a successful campaign to black consumers. However, he warned that only well-trained black
consultants should be used. He cautioned the audience not to assume that just because someone was black that he or she knew everything about black consumers. Instead, companies should seek out groups like the NAMD to find trained experts on reaching black consumers.49

In 1956, Joseph Albright, sales representative for Curtiss Candy and president of the NAMD, appeared before the MEC and extended Edwards' argument. In his speech Albright told the attendees that running a campaign in the black consumer market without proper guidance was akin to playing Russian roulette. He reasoned, "Do not invest one dime in a marketing program for Negroes without first securing proper guidance. This may take the form of a sales promotion and marketing member on your staff, or the services of a private organization. But do it [emphasis in original] or, with the best intention in the world, you may not get your product off the ground." Albright, like Edwards, encouraged companies to find black experts like those who belonged to the NAMD to secure the needed guidance. By the late 1950s even articles not penned by members of the organization began highlighting the importance of securing guidance from black experts before entering the black consumer market.

Some men and women in the advertising industry recognized the need for black consultants to guide campaigns even before the formation of the NAMD. A number of the black people who entered the advertising industry came from company's that had been active in marketing to blacks, activities in Negro radio, or the black publishing establishment. Regardless of their point of origin, most
had some prior connection to the African-American consumer market before entering the advertising industry. Although only a few high-profile blacks were hired into the industry during the 1950s, important groundwork was laid for an expansion in black employment in the industry in the coming decades.

*African-Americans in the Mainstream Advertising Industry*

*Clarence Holte*

In the early 1950s, executives at the advertising firm of Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborne (BBDO) concluded that they needed to hire an African-American to guide their clients active in the black consumer market. Lyle Purchase, manager of merchandising and research, conceived of the idea of having someone in the firm familiar with African-Americans and their buying habits while he was completing a study of black drugstores in Detroit. In the course of the study it became clear to him exactly how little he or the other members of the BBDO executive staff knew about the black consumer market. Therefore, Purchase and others in the firm set about looking for an African-American to fill the gap in their structure. After an extensive search, the firm settled on Clarence Holte, a black sales representative with Lever Brothers. Holte had been with Lever Brothers for ten years and had at one point been the only African-American on the sales staff. Consequently he was familiar with both the black consumer market and with the pressures of being the only black face at the upper levels of a major company. Holte also had the advantage of knowing some of the leaders of the newly independent nations in Africa, in particular, while in college he had counted among his friends Nnamdi Azikiwe, who became
the governor general of Nigeria. During his time at Lever Brothers, Holte had effectively used his international connections to help the firm improve its poor image among the people of West Africa. When Holte applied for the BBDO position his experience and international contacts successfully elevated him over the other twenty applicants.51

When Tide announced Clarence Holte's appointment a writer glossed him as the "Jackie Robinson of advertising's major leagues." Purchase introduced Holte to the advertising community and spoke about the reasons leading to his employment. Purchase made it very clear that Holte's employment was a conscious choice by the agency rather than a response to outside pressure. "I'm not a crusader," he declared. "This is a cold calculated move on my part for the dollar sign only. I was not pushed. I was not shoved. I was only moved by the dollar sign. We feel that by taking direct aim at the target with a rifle instead of a shotgun we may be able to score more bulls eyes."52 Holte's responsibilities included developing marketing programs for black consumers, providing research analysis of the market, and acting as a troubleshooter for clients in the black consumer market. Purchase also announced that BBDO would be adding 375 black families to the national consumer panel of 3,000 families maintained by the firm. The black families were to serve as the base for Holte's research into the tastes and purchasing habits of black consumers. BBDO sought to become the leading agency for the black consumer market and Holte's appointment was the first step.53
Despite the non-altruistic reasons behind Holte’s appointment, some in the advertising press viewed it as evidence that mainstream agencies were preparing to open their doors to blacks. Given the size and importance of BBDO in the advertising community, one reporter surmised that other agencies would quickly follow them in this effort. This assessment proved wrong, however, because well into the 1960s BBDO remained the only agency with a special markets division for black consumers. Other agencies utilized outside black consultants when initiating campaigns to reach black consumers, and a number employed blacks in their firms, but none other than BBDO had a special division within the corporate structure.54

Reporters for the mainstream and advertising trade press were not the only ones who had high expectations from Holte’s appointment. Reporters for the black press also viewed Holte’s employment with BBDO as an important step. This perception was aided when the firm announced Holte’s employment in a manner that assured widespread coverage in the black press. The firm held a luncheon at its New York offices and invited representatives from the major black newspapers. Accordingly the Chicago Defender, Pittsburgh Courier, and Baltimore Afro-American, the three largest organs of the period, simultaneously announced Holte’s appointment. Headlines in the papers included: “Clarence Holt[e], Market Specialist, Gets Executive Post With BBDO, “Purchasing Power Recognized: Major Ad Agency Hires First Tan Executive,” and “Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborne Makes a Really Sound Move.” Each of the reporters viewed Holte’s appointment as evidence that respect black consumers and their
purchasing power was increasing. Moreover, the employment of a black man by a major agency was taken as evidence that the advertising industry was becoming more racially inclusive. A year after Holte’s appointment the publishers of the *Chicago Defender* placed BBDO on their honor role for “extending the area of democracy” by employing a black executive.\(^{55}\)

While virtually all reporters (regardless of race) viewed Holte’s appointment as a major step, a few saw his employment as having an even deeper implication. Black conservative George Schuyler, an editorial writer for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, waxed poetic about Holte having entered “the advertising Valhalla.” But beyond the Nordic imagery, Schuyler viewed Holte as positioned to influence how corporate America, and eventually all of America, felt about African-Americans. Schuyler reasoned that because BBDO had a number of major corporate clients, Holte would be in the position to demonstrate to company executives the value of the black consumer market. Moreover, he would be able to show the tremendous social and economic progress that blacks had made over the past several years. Schuyler viewed Holte and other blacks in the advertising and marketing fields as being part of “a quiet revolution” that would “chang[e] the minds of the people who own and run America.” He believed that once minds had changed about blacks in the economic sense that the new improved perception would naturally filter over to thoughts about blacks in the social, political, and cultural sense as well. “A man with a large Negro market for his high-class product is not easy prey for propaganda about Aframerican
barbarism or impoverishment," Schuyler observed. He concluded that when people saw blacks as good customers they would ultimately begin to view them as good citizens.56

After the public attention that surrounded his employment settled down, Holte began his responsibilities at BBDO. He focused on campaigns aimed at the black consumer market, acted as the host for leaders from Africa, appeared at conferences of black publishers, and wrote columns and articles for the sales and advertising press. Because of his status with BBDO, Holte's opinions appeared in virtually every major article on black consumers published during the mid- to late-1950s. He was also a member of the NAMD, at one point sitting on the executive board. Thus Holte's was a very public position that garnered attention from those both inside and outside the advertising industry. Holte knew and recognized the importance of his position as well. "I am very conscious of my responsibility here," he emphasized.57 He knew that in many ways the future of blacks in the advertising industry, at BBDO and elsewhere, depended on his performance.58

Holte's years in sales and marketing, had made him familiar with the manner in which black consumers had been approached in the past. He was well aware of the negative and stereotypical representations of blacks that had been widely used at one time. Consequently Holte actively used his position with BBDO to change the perception of the black consumer market among advertisers and agencies. He also used his status to change the way in which advertisements from BBDO clients depicted blacks. He was an avid collector of books on
African-Americans and he amassed over 7,000 of them by the end of his life. He drew from these materials to create ads that called attention to the positive aspects of African-American life. One award-winning series, "Ingenious Americans," developed for Calvert Distillers, called attention to the contributions blacks had made that were ignored by history textbooks. Copies of the series were reprinted in a pocket-sized version and distributed to schools and community groups.59

Holte clearly recognized that he was the first African-American in a mainstream agency with the decision-making power to shift the approach to black consumers. He used that power to urge clients to deal with blacks in a respectful and dignified manner. Holte also used his position to encourage agencies and advertisers to hire more African-American specialists and representatives. He reasoned that doing so would enhance the advertisers' reputation among black consumers and lead to increased sales. Also, African-Americans would interpret the employment of black consultants as an indication that a company had a genuine interest in the social well-being of blacks, not just in their dollars.60

In addition to creating advertisements, Holte also led in the analysis of the African-American consumer market. In 1958, he published an article in Printer's Ink that anticipated two of the arguments that would develop about the black consumer market in the 1960s. First, Holte contended that directing advertising campaigns at black consumers would not harm sales. He demonstrated this with surveys done among blacks living in the North and whites living in the North and
South. The survey indicated that over one-third of blacks questioned could name a company that gave some recognition to black consumers and over one-fourth could name companies that did not. Holte also showed that blacks would consciously avoid buying products of companies that did not extend such recognition. The survey among whites living in the South showed that fewer than ten percent of whites could name a company known for helping or extending recognition to blacks. Furthermore, within that ten percent, fewer than half said that they would avoid such a company's products. Among whites living in the North, only a small percentage could name a company whose ads recognized or did not recognize black consumers. He concluded, "In short, the whites don't care, but a good many Negroes do." Thus a company could increase sales among blacks without negatively impacting those to whites.61

Second, in the *Printer's Ink* article, Holte highlighted stratifications within the black consumer market.62 Holte reasoned that the social structure among African-Americans was in the shape of a triangle (versus a diamond for the general market). Black America, he pointed out, had a small upper class, a slightly larger middle class, with the masses of blacks forming the wide base of the triangle. Members of each of these three classes had specific purchasing motivations that would need to be tapped in order to increase sales. Among the upper class, education and respectability were the primary characteristics. Members of this group had attained high education and employment levels, but they resented the impact that racism had on their social and economic opportunities. The middle group was made up of persons with lower educational
levels, but with well paying white-collar jobs. Members of this group sought to emulate the purchasing tastes and lifestyle of upper class blacks. The largest group, the lower class, was composed of working-class blacks with low educational levels. Holte concluded that members of this group were more likely to practice conspicuous consumption and were more product loyal than were middle and upper classes. He also reasoned that, like the middle class, the members of the lower class sought to emulate the upper class. Therefore if advertisements indicated that the leading members of the black community used a particular product, it would likely increase sales among other blacks.\(^{53}\)

Holte's stratification of the black community challenged advertising agencies to change their perceptions of there being one mass black consumer market in which all members could be reached with the same appeals. Instead, agencies had to recognize that what attracted one group of blacks might repel another. Holte had not created the straitifications in the black consumer market, but his analysis of them initiated a discourse on changing the marketing efforts toward blacks. His was not the only voice on the matter, but it would not be until the concept of market segmentation was more widely accepted that his ideas were widely received.

Holte's analysis of the segmentations in the black consumer market also illustrates the contributions that he and other blacks brought to the advertising industry. They did more than change the negative characterizations of blacks used in the industry; they also provided a more nuanced and complex picture of the black consumer market.
Yet their most important contribution in this period lay in that their efforts helped undermine existing stereotypes prevalent in advertisements and about black consumers.

Also, Holte and other blacks in the industry illustrated the motivations that underlay black consumer purchases, information that was not available prior to their arrival. They also showed that to reach and sell black consumers a campaign had to appeal to as many different aspects among blacks as it did among whites. The advertising industry could not continue to approach the blacks in an offhanded manner, but members of the industry had to employ critical research to carefully craft advertising campaigns. These appeals went largely unheeded until the 1960s when black consumers themselves began to indicate that the things that had once been enough for their patronage were no longer sufficient to guarantee sales.  

*Roy Eaton*

Although Clarence Holte quickly became the most famous African-American on Madison Avenue, he was not the only black in a mainstream agency. In 1955 Roy Eaton was hired by Young and Rubicam (Y&R), and together he and Holte became the two highest profile blacks “on the Avenue” in the 1950s. Eaton came to Y&R with a list of qualifications that were impressive for a person of any color. At the age of sixteen he had enrolled in the City College of New York (CCNY), where he studied history and languages, and the Manhattan School of Music, where he studied the piano. He was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Alpha Theta (the history honorary society), and he graduated from both colleges.
simultaneously earning *magna cum laude* from CCNY. Eaton went on to win prestigious fellowships to study music in Europe, to win major awards in musical competition, and to teach in the United States and abroad. After studying in Europe, Eaton later earned master's degrees in music from Yale and the Manhattan School of Music.\(^6^5\)

In 1953, Eaton was drafted and for two years he worked with the Armed Forces Radio Service writing and producing programs. It was in the Army that Eaton first encountered the advertising business, and he worked with representatives from Dancer-Fitzgerald-Sample, the Army's ad agency. After leaving the Army, Eaton was ready for a career change. He realized that he was tired of teaching and that he could not continue to make a living as a pianist. One day while listening to the radio, he heard a piece of music that led him to write to the network for the song's details. Rather than the a person from the network responding to his inquiry, someone from Y&R, the agency responsible for the piece, wrote back. Later, while walking down Madison Avenue, Eaton remembered the agency's response and thought: "Why don't I go up to an advertising agency and see what they may have for me?" He then walked into Y&R and was granted an interview with Harvey Fielder, the assistant personnel director. He later recalled that he was not sure why he got an immediate interview, saying, "Maybe it was because he was curious why someone with my background would apply to Y&R, or maybe because it was the hottest day in 1955 and he had plenty of time."\(^6^6\) Whatever the reason, the personnel director told Eaton that the agency no longer provided background music for radio
programs. Rather than turn Eaton away, he suggested that he try his hand
writing advertising copy. That weekend Eaton pulled ten ads from Life magazine,
wrote new copy for them and took them into Y&R the following Monday. His
work sufficiently impressed Fielder enough that Fielder arranged additional
interviews for him within the firm. Eaton was finally hired as a commercial writer
to create jingles for radio and television commercials, becoming the first African-
American hired at Y&R in a professional capacity.\textsuperscript{67}

Roy Eaton found almost immediate success at Y&R. He crafted jingles for a
number of products including Chef Boy-Ar-Dee, Cheer, and Kent Cigarettes.
Eaton spoke several languages, and he drew on that knowledge to create foreign
language ads for clients. For example, he used his knowledge of Spanish to
write jingles for Cheer that were used on Spanish-language radio. His biggest
success with the firm, however, was with the jingle he wrote for Kent cigarettes.
Eaton composed a jingle using a jazz accompaniment, and the tune was so
successful that it was made into a record called "The Kent Song." At one point
the song was being played on over 900 radio and 125 television stations. A
number of jazz musicians and deejays also wrote to the company praising the
song. The success of "The Kent Song" led Kent's parent company, P. Lorillard &
Company, to increase the billing to Y&R by $1,000,000. Eaton later left Y&R for
a short stint as creative director for Music Makers, a producer of jingles and
background music. In 1959, he became musical director at Benton & Bowles, a
post he held for many years.\textsuperscript{68}
Although Holte was hailed as the “Jackie Robinson” of advertising, Roy Eaton’s appointment was no less groundbreaking. Eaton was likely the first African-American, and for many years the only one, to work in a mainstream agency on campaigns for the mainstream market. Because Eaton was a classically trained musician with four degrees and years of experience and was not restricted to campaigns aimed only at black consumers. When Eaton was hired at Y&R, and later Benton and Bowles, it was for his expertise and talents. "He could write and play the white man’s music and so was not restricted to black ads and products," wrote historian Stephen Fox. In contrast, Holte was hired for the express purpose of working on campaigns aimed at the black consumer market. In short, Eaton did not find himself locked into the same types of creative boxes as did other blacks they entered mainstream advertising firms.

The experiences of Holte and Eaton illustrate the state of race in the advertising industry during the 1950s. For an African-American to find a place in a mainstream agency he or she either had to enter an agency with clients who had an interest in black consumers, or he or she had to have a list of qualifications and experience matching or exceeding those of whites. Although the number of blacks in mainstream agencies remained small during the decade, more blacks entered the industry for the former rather than latter reasons. Despite the prominence of Holte and Eaton, their presence did not lead to the influx of blacks into mainstream agencies that some expected. Although the
number of blacks in mainstream agencies remained small, the number of black-owned advertising firms increased significantly there was a significant increase in the number of black-owned advertising firms.

**African-American Advertising Firms**

**Leonard Evans Associates**

As interest in black consumers grew during the 1950s, a number of black entrepreneurs seized the opportunities available and founded advertising firms. When Leonard Evans founded his agency in 1953, he brought with him nearly 20 years of experience in advertising and marketing. Evans was a graduate of the University of Illinois, and he had gone to law school. He had also worked as a life-insurance broker and as an executive at a black-owned cosmetics firm. During the 1940s, he had been a member of the Associated Publishers newspaper representation firm. While with that company, he worked with the *Afro-American* study that examined the purchasing habits of black consumers in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. After leaving Associated Publishers, he briefly set up a small advertising agency in New York but left the firm to join Arthur Meyerhoff and Company, a major advertising firm based in Chicago. He recalled that though he wanted to own his own firm he did not want to pass up the chance to gain the experience that working in a major advertising firm would bring. At Meyerhoff, Evans moved up the corporate ladder until he reached the level of account supervisor, the first African-American to hold that title at an agency registered with the American Association of Advertising Agencies (4A's). When he founded his second agency—this time in Chicago—
he continued to work at Meyerhoff, to initiate projects like the National Negro Network and to develop advertising campaigns for the black consumer market.\textsuperscript{72}

Evans' experience and reputation in the African-American consumer market, combined with his relationship with Meyerhoff, gave his firm access to national advertisers that other black-owned agencies lacked. Evans' firm created black consumer market advertising campaigns for Pet Milk, Philip Morris, Wrigley gum, Roma wine, and Armour meat products. Aside from Meyerhoff, however Evans also had the connections within the black business community that led major clients to his firm. In 1957 an executive at Pillsbury Mills wrote to Claude Barnett, head of the Associated Negro Press, for advice on an agency that could be used to reach the black consumer market. The executive, A.L. Powell, was familiar with Barnett from prior work that he had done to generate Pillsbury's interest in black consumers. Barnett responded to Powell's inquiry by saying that the agency that Pillsbury was considering lacked the expertise to develop effectively a campaign for the black consumer market. Instead he recommended that the firm use the Evans agency, because Evans was a "capable and experienced man in the field of public relations in the Negro market." Hence Evans experience and connections gave him a decided advantage over other black-owned firms.\textsuperscript{73}

In 1957 Evans announced that he was "intensifying operations" at his agency. Because of his strong reputation in the black consumer market field, this was a significant announcement. If Evans were focusing on his agency, rather than his work at Meyerhoff, many people in the industry assumed that he had important
reasons for doing so. Evans' opinions on black consumers were often reprinted in trade journals and his theories on shifts in the black consumer market carried weight. Evans announced his intensification in the market because he believed that changes in the market were demanding a greater level of expertise and involvement to reach black consumers. Therefore his focus was shifting from the accounts he dealt with at Meyerhoff to accounts controlled at his firm.

Evans argued that black consumers were moving away from imitation buying and were now choosing products based on their own criteria rather than parroting the choices of whites. He also argued that the ads that were being used to reach the black consumer market had to change. "You can't expect an ad from a mass publication to succeed in a Negro medium. It hasn't the right elements for a positive association," he argued. Instead, he insisted, the ad needed to be appropriately structured and worded in a way that would reach the changing black consumer. Consequently, with these new demands in mind, Evans positioned his firm to be the leading consultant to guide corporate America through the market changes and to effectively reach black consumers.74

While some of Evans' statements on black consumers can be read as condescending or self-serving, they helped legitimize the idea that reaching black consumers demanded different advertising than that for white consumers. Evans, and others, repeatedly argued that blacks could not be approached as if they wanted to be white. Evans' statements that a new level of expertise was needed to reach black consumers created opportunities both for his own agency and for other blacks interested in the advertising industry as well.
**Vince Cullers Advertising**

Although it was not immediately obvious in 1956, in that year one of the future leaders of the black advertising agency sector was founded—Vince Cullers Advertising. It would not have been immediately noticed because for years the firm remained a small agency with a local client base. The perseverance of the founder, Vince Cullers, paid off, however, because during the 1960s and 70s the firm became one of the leading black-owned agencies. In the early years, though, the firm did not appear capable of lasting through the end of the decade, let alone through the end of the twentieth century.\(^75\)

Cullers began his advertising career as a Marine combat artist in the Pacific Theater during the Second World War. Upon his return to the United States, he wanted to use his artistic skills to earn a living. Accordingly he and two men started an advertising business. The firm secured some work from local businessmen, but the billings were not enough to support three partners, and the firm ceased operations. Despite this failure, Cullers was determined to succeed in the business. He tried to secure work with mainstream advertising agencies but racial discrimination kept him from securing consistent employment.\(^76\)

In the early 1950s, Cullers worked for a short period of time as an art director at *Ebony* magazine. Although his time with the company was short, it had a profound impact upon his career plans. While at *Ebony*, his position required him to work with the magazine's advertising layouts. From this position, he noted that the advertising images of blacks, even those designed for a black-oriented publication, needed a change. Echoing the position held by Evans and other
blacks in the industry, Cullers believed that many of the ads done by mainstream agencies approached black consumers as if they wanted to be white. Ads that were placed in *Ebony* often received no special creative attention from the advertising agency other than the replacement of white faces with black ones. He recalled that "there was no effort to make the ads appealing to blacks... and there was nothing particularly creative being done." Therefore, after leaving *Ebony*, he decided to use his own artistic skill and experience to change the ways in which blacks were portrayed in advertising. To fulfill that goal he founded the Vince Cullers advertising firm. 77

The agency began in a small office and was able to secure clients from local black businesses. Clients included a number of black insurance companies and a local snack food company. The agency also developed programming for Negro radio. In the late 1950s, the agency staff created a Sunday morning musical program for a local savings and loan. The firm also secured some work from mainstream agencies, but Cullers found crossing racial barriers difficult. On one occasion a white client canceled a project after finding out that Cullers was black. Yet not every white client rejected Cullers' work. Some whites assisted him from behind the scenes, saying, "I'm going to help you, but don't tell anybody... here is something you can do for me." These clients came to Cullers out of appreciation for his work rather than pity. The racial politics of the times, however, prevented such solicitation from coming openly and in effect they limited the growth of the agency. 78
Finally, when the civil rights protests of the 1960s forced advertisers and agencies to change their approach to black consumers, the Cullers firm achieved appreciable growth. Fortunately the agency was able to survive to the point where it could be a beneficiary of the changed attitudes. Other black-owned agencies founded during the 1950s, despite high expectations, would not be as fortunate as the Cullers firm would.79

**Scott and Nash Advertising**

In 1957, Thomas Nash and George Scott founded the Nash and Scott agency in Oakland, California. The two men found that their business was not welcomed everywhere and they had to search for office space for two weeks before finding a building that accepted black tenants. The Scott and Nash agency was guided by the central principle that any advertising campaigns directed to black consumers had to be preceded by a strong public relations campaign. The firm's partners recognized that black consumers were becoming more discerning in their patronage and considered more than simple advertising appeals when making purchasing decisions. Therefore the agency staff counseled clients to initiate public relations efforts that emphasized that they were interested in blacks as people, not just in their dollars. Hence the firm recommended, for example, that black models be used in campaigns to reach black consumers. The models used, however, should not be too dark—so as to avoid the possibility of the ad being viewed as an effort to lampoon blacks. The firm created a number of ad campaigns in the black consumer market and for several years was the only black-owned agency west of Chicago.80
Also in 1957, Al Benson, a black disc jockey, and Lee Brooks, a white advertising executive formed the Benson-Brooks agency in Chicago. The firm was founded with the sole purpose of selling to the black consumer market. Al Benson had been actively selling products to blacks for thirteen years in his capacity as a disc jockey. He now sought a means to transfer that experience from the radio booth to the executive office of an adman. The Benson-Brooks agency was designed to work only on accounts directed to the black consumer market. "I want to make it clear that we are not competing with any other agency, and we do not intend to take away any business from other agencies," Brooks announced. The firm's partners wanted to make it clear that they wanted to become the leaders in a niche of the market rather than to compete for general accounts. The agency wanted to establish a successful relationship with agencies in Chicago and then to open branch offices in cities with large black populations. Also, though the agency was interracial, black representatives were used for all outside contact work. At no point did the firm leaders want mainstream agency executives to think they were competing for accounts in the general market. Thus Benson-Brooks executives employed black representatives so that there was no question what type of accounts the firm was after.⁸¹

Like other black-owned agencies, Benson-Brooks wanted to capitalize on a reputation of expertise in reaching the black consumer market. Unfortunately, the appreciation of the black consumer market had not reached the point where a
firm could grow on accounts only directed to black consumers, especially if it were outside of New York City, the center of the advertising community. Consequently, during the 1950s, the firm had difficulty in securing clients on a national level and like many black-owned agencies remained a small concern until it eventually folded. Not until the late 1960s and early 70s would African-American-owned agencies begin to achieve appreciable growth.\textsuperscript{82}

\textbf{Advertising, Television, and Black Consumers}

Television presented the advertising industry with an unprecedented reach into the lives of all consumers. In terms of black consumers, however, the medium met with an entirely new set of problems. In 1951 the Blatz Brewing company sought to reach out to black consumers through sponsorship of the Amos \textit{'n'} Andy show, a program about blacks living in Harlem. Blatz executives thought they had a surefire winner on their hands, given that the show had been an enormously popular radio program for over twenty years. Moreover, the television program was to be cast with black actors, rather than with the whites who had starred as the voices of the characters on radio. Although company leaders felt that a televised version of Amos \textit{'n'} Andy would vault them to leadership among black consumers, the show ran into difficulty. The NAACP openly criticized the Blatz company for sponsorship of the program. Though the group applauded company officials for reaching out black consumers, group leaders deplored the vehicle used. Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP, called the show "a gross libel on the Negro and distortion of the truth." The show's portrayals of bumbling African-Americans were heightened further by
the images of sophisticated, attractive whites drinking beer on Blatz commercials during program interludes. Although the directors of the show and creators of the original concept, Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, spent months looking for blacks to play the starring roles, the effort failed to satisfy the NAACP.\footnote{83}

The leadership of the NAACP was carrying on a fight against the *Amos 'n' Andy* program that had gone on since the show had originally appeared on radio. In 1931, Robert Vann publisher of the *Pittsburgh Courier* sought to have the show banned from the air. Also Nannie Helen Burroughs, head of a prominent school for black girls in Washington D.C., argued:

> Amos and Andy have piled up millions for two business concerns and two white men. Amos and Andy broadcast subtle and mischievous propaganda against Negro business. They tell the world that when it comes to business the Negro is a huge joke and a successful failure. Millions of children are getting their first impression of the Negro from Amos and Andy. But there is another Negro in America. Do the American people want to meet him on the air? He keeps a clean cab, does not steal money from his organization, is not a blusterer, a braggart, nor a sham. He has social standards and high ideals and lives up to them. He should be given the same 'break' on the air that Amos and Andy have had.\footnote{84}

The leaders of the NAACP, therefore, would not allow a distortion of blacks, even one that had existed for two decades, to transfer over to television without a fight. The organization was concerned that the transfer from an aural to a visual medium would do even further damage to the image of blacks in America. Given the larger struggle against racism, discrimination, and segregation with which they were engaged, they did not want the most powerful communications tool ever invented to carry a negative image of blacks, especially with no programming to counter that image. Even though the group tried to utilize
economic pressure to force the removal of the program, they lacked the critical mass to do so. The program remained on network television until 1953 and was then run in syndication with full sponsor support until 1966.\textsuperscript{85}

The growing civil rights movement also brought challenging issues before the advertising industry. After the outbreak of violence in Little Rock, Arkansas, over the integration of Central High School, agencies became wary of associating client products with African-Americans.\textsuperscript{86} Pillsbury executives, although they actively sought help from Leonard Evans to develop the African-American market, were concerned that too close an association with blacks would get them labeled "nigger flour" and damage sales among whites.\textsuperscript{87} Advertiser fears over association with blacks were only heightened with the spread of television. The televised appearance of some blacks had resulted in newspaper petitions, boycott threats, and the cancellation of franchise agreements. Yet advertiser fears of an association with blacks are best exhibited with the case of the \textit{Nat King Cole} show.\textsuperscript{88}

In early 1956, Nat King Cole became the first African-American to have his own television show. The National Broadcasting Company (NBC) initiated the program as a way to give advertisers access to the black consumer market. The \textit{Nat King Cole} show began as a quarter-hour program sponsored nationally by Carter Products (parent company of Arrid deodorant and Rise shaving cream). Cole's show was later expanded to a half-hour, but after its initial contract ran
out, Carter Products refused to renew its sponsorship. Although the show was able to find some local sponsors, no national sponsor was found, and the show was cancelled after 64 weeks.  

The sponsorship difficulty faced by the Cole show illustrates the dilemma that advertisers believed they were in during the late 1950s. Some companies, like Carter Products, may have wanted to reach out to black consumers, but they feared doing so because of racial prejudice. Advertisers and agencies did not want to risk alienating groups of white consumers, and so they capitulated by avoiding most signs of African-American use of their products. Though companies continued to run advertisements in black-oriented publications, they did so because most of the patrons of those forms were black. Therefore advertisers were sure that they would not antagonize the growing black middle class or fall prey to backlash from white consumers.

However, the irony that Amos 'n' Andy did not have trouble securing sponsors like the Cole did show was not lost on African-Americans. For years two white men who pretended to be black were used as spokesmen for a number of products. Amos 'n' Andy stars Freeman and Gosdell appeared in character as the black stars and out of character as themselves and acted as spokespersons for products. As television developed, however, live blacks were not used to sell any products, not even those who played the characters in Amos 'n' Andy. In a letter to the NAACP, one man reflected, "Isn't it strange that the Amos 'n' Andy television show had no difficulty in obtaining sponsors? Was it because the show low-graded the character of Negroes? As long as Negroes can play parts that
tend to be stereotyped, everything is all right." Others wrote into NBC in support of the Cole show: "To coin a word, your show was super-sensational. Best wishes in getting a sponsor. If he sells toothpaste, I'll buy it. If he sells beauty, I'll try it. If he sells a broomstick, I'll fly it." In another letter a salesman wrote: "I understand that you've had trouble selling this show. Well, I'm a 'white' salesman myself and I just wished I had Nat selling my product for me. Everyone I talked to thinks he's terrific regardless of race or color. The ad boys are all wet on this one." Upon leaving his program, Cole argued that the problem was not with racial prejudice, but with Madison Avenue. "After all, Madison Avenue is in the North, and that's where the resistance is. I think sometimes the South is used as a football to take some of the stain off us in the North. Madison Avenue still runs television, and there is a certain amount of reluctance on its part to sell my show," he contended. Moreover, he reasoned that of all the sponsors that the program had on a local basis (Continental Baking Co., Gunther Beer, Folgers Coffee, Rival Dog Food, Weidman Brewing, Gold Brand Beer, commercial Solvents, Wilen Wine, Swan Cleaners, and Coca-Cola) none had lost any sales in any region of the country. "Ad Alley thinks it's still a white man's world," Cole observed. "The Nat King Cole show put the spotlight on them. It proved who dictates what is seen on TV."  

**Conclusion**

The 1950s were an important decade in the development of the black consumer market and in the movement of blacks into the advertising industry. The economic growth of African-American consumers continued to grow and
many corporate executives gave black consumers increased attention. The activities of the trade press, growth of Negro radio, and the continued success of *Ebony* magazine increasingly legitimized the Negro market. There was also greater research information available on black consumers and their purchasing habits than ever before.

In addition, although the fight to end the *Amos 'n' Andy* show and to find a national sponsor for *Nat King Cole* failed, each foreshadowed important developments in the coming decade. These two struggles anticipated the increased pressure that African-Americans would bring to bear on the nation's communications and image-producing industries. Also, the *Amos 'n' Andy* struggle reflected the fact that African-Americans were increasingly unwilling to accept some of the traditional approaches that used to receive their patronage.
Notes


3 Some of the more prominent black consulting firms included: the Moss Kendrix Organization, Jesse Owens and Associates, Ben Burns and Associates, Kenneth Wilson Associates, and the John E. Pearson Company. The three most prominent black academics involved with the black consumer market during the 1950s were: economist Dr. Henry Bullock, sociologist Dr. George Edmund Haynes, and economist Joseph T. Johnson.


In 1952 Johnson wrote a piece widely reprinted in trade journals. See John H. Johnson, "Does Your Sales Force Know How to Sell the Negro Trade? Some Do's and Don'ts," Advertising Age (March 17, 1952): 73-75.

The merchandising program was available to be used by all advertisers in Ebony. The program had a staff of 14 men who placed point-of-sale material and consulted with advertisers on advertising and public relations campaigns among black consumers. The staff also conducted product surveys with black consumers. See "Johnson Publishing Launches Merchandising Program for 'Ebony,' 'Tan' Advertisers," Advertising Age (October 22, 1951): 23; "'Ebony' Unveils Movie, Continuing Research Program," Advertising Age (August 23, 1954): 45; Ebony, advertisement, Advertising Age (October 17, 1955): 84.

Ebony, advertisement, Advertising Age (October 9, 1950): 7.

Reaching the Negro Market, pamphlet advertisement, Advertising Age (September 8, 1952): 64; "'Jet' Lights Into Negro Newspapers," Advertising Age (September 8, 1952), 3, 6.


Sponsor's annuals on the Negro market were published once per year from 1952 to 1968, usually between July and September. "The Forgotten 15,000,000," Sponsor (October 10, 1949): 24-25, 54-55; "The Forgotten 15,000,000 Part 2," Sponsor (October 24, 1949), 30+; "Mr. Sponsor Asks...," Sponsor (July 28, 1952): 42.


24 Ibid.


27 Weems, 43-48.

28 Ibid., 47-48.

29 On the use of soap operas as a sales medium in the 1940s see Roland Marchand, Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). Weems, 47-48


31 Ibid., 152.

32 Years after the demise of NNN Leonard Evans argued that "advertiser reluctance during the initial turmoil of desegregation" led to the demise of NNN. See "Action People," Marketing/Communications (February 1968): 21-22.


34 On Negro-appeal radio broadcasting groups see Weems, 46-48.

35 "Signpost on the Road to Maturity," Sponsor (September 17, 1956): 8, 38.

36 "The Forgotten 15,000,000," 54.

37 "Selling to Negroes," 86.


41 "What the Public Thinks, Counts," 159.
Quoted in Weems, 52.

Weems, 52-53.


Chuck Smith, interview with author.

Ibid.


Chuck Smith, interview with author.

Paul K. Edwards was the author of The Southern Urban Negro as a Consumer, published in 1932. During the thirties he had worked with Claude Barnett to publicize a sales program among black consumers (see Chapter 1 of the present work). On his speech to the Merchandising Executives Club see "Role of Trained Personnel in Selling to Negro Market is Stressed to Marketers," Advertising Age (May 9, 1955): 57.


Clarence Holte was not the first African-American hired into a mainstream agency, but he was the first to reach an executive level position. On Holte see Fox, 278. "Clarence Holte's Search Into the Black Past," Ebony (April 1970), 94-102.

"The Negro Market," Tide (July 25, 1952), 44.


Hicks, 5.


Ibid., 98-99.

There had been some efforts in the early 1950s to present a segmented Negro market but most were short lived. Advertisers and agencies had enough difficulty understanding the mass Negro market let alone smaller more complex segments. See "Class Magazine for Negro Market Bows in Chicago," Advertising Age (April 13, 1953): 38; "Convention Offers Chance to Tap Negro Baptist Market," Advertising Age (March 14, 1955): 64.


"Versatile Adman... Roy Eaton," Advertising Age (June 17, 1957): 70; M.L. Stein, Blacks in Communications: Journalism, Public Relations and Advertising (New York: Julian Messner), 162-163.

Evans was not alone in his appreciation for the training and experience that working at a mainstream agency provided. During the Golden Age of blacks in the advertising industry (see Chapters 7 and 8) a number of owners of black advertising agencies had gained their industry experience working in a mainstream firm.


"Negro Consumer Actions Analyzed by Agency Chief," Printer's Ink (June 7, 1957): 82-83.


Moore, 157; Woods, 156.

Moore, 158-159; Fox, 278; Sivulka, 264.

Woods, 156-158.

“Scott and Nash Formed to Specialize in Negro Market,” Advertising Age (February 11, 1957): 44; “Nation Within a Nation,” 41.


White, 31; Stole, 351.


Stole, 359; Kern-Foxworth, 38.


Stole, 360-366.

Ibid., 365.

Ibid.

Nat King Cole, “After a Year on Network TV, Singer Says Prejudice is Much More Finance Than Romance,” Ebony (February 1958): 30.

94 Cole, 30.
CHAPTER 3 – 1960-1967

African-American Consumer Activism

In the early 1960s it became clear to some black marketing consultants that the African-American market was changing. Specifically, consultants noted that blacks were directing their attention beyond the advertising face—as illustrated by the use of black models—to the employment policies of companies active in the black consumer market. Blacks began to look for evidence that company executives not only desired their patronage as customers, but that they also had a concern for them as people. This latter concern was addressed by the employment of blacks within the white collar areas of a company beyond that of the "special marketers" of the 1950s. So even companies with a history of involvement in the black consumer market, faced boycotts and pressure for more racially inclusive employment policies. In the 1960s blacks actively sought evidence of employment opportunities at all levels of corporations, from the cliched mailroom to (eventually) the boardroom.

The advertising agency business was not spared from social pressure. Leaders of advertising agencies too were called upon to be more racially inclusive. In the 1960s activists used the economic power of black consumers to
press the advertising industry to present images of racial inclusiveness, and to begin to employ more blacks within the industry.

Yet in terms of recognizing the changes demanded by black consumers and civil rights organizations, the normally “cutting edge” experts on Madison Avenue were “slow to catch on.” Rather than responding to and leading the changes demanded by blacks, advertising agencies often followed rather than led their clients down the road to racial inclusion. Once in the industry, several blacks began to use their positions, and the presence of external pressure, to influence industry leaders to employ blacks in even greater numbers. Industry observers in the trade press observed that a movement for change in the advertising industry was underway. The concern on the minds of many in the industry was how long the pressure would remain and also how far reaching the changes would be. As one *New York Times* reporter observed, “Though advertising has traditionally assumed that it could divorce itself from the nation’s social issues, the Negro revolution has proved otherwise.”

**Black Consumers and the Black Media**

By the start of the 1960s it had become axiomatic in some segments of the advertising community to speak of the existence of a black consumer market. During the 1950s writers in the trade press had done numerous articles on the market, there was a proliferation of black consultants, and major advertisers had initiated efforts to better attract the black consumer population. Also, the black population had risen steadily during the 1950s, climbing 25 percent versus 16 percent for the white population. Also, the value of the black consumer market
had increased with estimates topping $19 billion per year. More important than the numerical increase, however, was the location of a majority of the black population. More than half of all blacks lived in 78 major cities. Also, over one-third of all blacks lived in the 25 largest cities in the nation. The significance of this distribution to advertisers was that these 25 cities accounted for over two-thirds of all retail sales and over 90 percent of all wholesale sales.\(^2\) Numerous articles in the trade press took note of these statistical factors and admitted that blacks were beyond a “minority market.” Instead, African-Americans were often “enough to make or break most sales efforts.”\(^3\) Company executives and their advertising agencies learned that if they wanted to see their products succeed in the cities, they would have to take black consumers into consideration.\(^4\)

Despite the growing importance of black consumers, the use of black-oriented newspapers as a medium to reach them continued to decline. During the 1950s, most black newspapers had faced rapidly dwindling advertising budgets. Therefore, in 1961, the three largest newspaper representatives, Interstate United Newspapers, Associated Publishers, and Defender Publications, merged to form Consolidated Publishers. This was an effort to give advertisers one source to use in order to reach over three hundred black-oriented newspapers and to increase (hopefully) the advertising revenue of those papers. Unfortunately for the publishers, the era of the black newspaper as a viable advertising medium (especially when the fight for advertising dollars was fierce) had long past. The presence of Ebony magazine and the growth of Negro radio
gave advertisers a significant reach into the black consumer market and made black newspapers irrelevant and often forgotten in the advertising mix. Black newspapers, which had at one time been the leading go-between between advertisers and black consumers, had reached the point of being viewed as "the weakest link in reaching black consumers."  

In the world of print, *Ebony* magazine took the place of black newspapers and stood alone as the leader for advertisers looking to reach black consumers through print advertisements. This position led some in the black advertising community to criticize advertisers in *Ebony* as being patronizing or condescending to blacks, in the sense that they placed ads in the magazine to get their companies "off the hook" with increasingly vocal black consumers. Regardless of this criticism, however, *Ebony* and publisher John Johnson were important features of the advertiser/black consumer relationship of the 1960s. Johnson continued in his "advisory" capacity to many of the nation's corporate executives, and he continued to advocate black consumers as a source of profits.

As *Ebony* grew in stature, so too did Negro radio. Robert Weems has pointed out that between 1961 and 1966 corporations increased their advertising budgets to black-oriented radio stations by nearly 300 percent. By the start of the 1960s, there were over 700 stations directing at least some of their programming to black listeners. In the early 1960s, several of these stations formed the Negro Radio Association to provide an organizational base to promote the medium among advertisers. From this base, stations were able to build the acceptance of
the medium and gain advertising dollars during the 1960s. Taken together, Negro radio and *Ebony* magazine gave advertisers unprecedented reach into the black consumer market. Many advertisers took advantage of this access to utilize the spending power of black consumers to increase their profit margins. Black consumers welcomed the interest that their spending power generated. But at the same time, some groups of white consumers indicated that they too had an interest in media images. In the 1960s the advertising industry became one of many contested battlegrounds.  

**Social Unrest and the Advertising Industry**

As the civil rights movement gathered strength, the unrest that it generated touched many phases of American life and industry, including that of advertising. The control of media became another battleground as both whites and blacks struggled to control the images that were viewed of their respective groups. Some white Southerners moved to control the depiction of them as a group as well as that of their region by those in the media. Some Southern broadcasters, for example, agreed to not broadcast news of racial unrest. This attack included the advertising industry that, in the opinion of some white Southerners, perpetuated false images of the South.

In 1961, advertising leaders became aware of a group called Monitor South. This organization was the brainchild of a group of white Southern businessmen, and the purpose was to review critically media programming and expose any images or programs that might be injurious to the Southern image. Members of the group were against "leftist" thinking that presented "all white southerners as
ignorant, degenerate and villainous and all Negroes as straight out of Oxford." The group targeted radio and television programs as well as the content produced by some of the nation's advertising agencies. Members of the group found themselves in league with Southern politicians like Strom Thurmond who lambasted the media industries for biased coverage of black activity in the South. Thurmond argued that networks too often presented blacks in a favorable light and white Southerners in a negative one. Furthermore, such spokespersons contended, the networks did not offer unbiased coverage. Instead they presented only the point of view of African-Americans while ignoring what they supposed to be that of whites. In regard to advertising agencies, Ned Touchstone, executive director of Monitor South, argued that some agencies "take an advertising budget and beat us over the head with it." The fight launched by Monitor South signaled that the media industries, including advertising, were going to have more persons interested in their content than in previous decades. Agency leaders, especially, were loathe to do anything that might potentially offend consumer groups. A.R. Pinkham, an executive with the Ted Bates advertising agency, likely summed up the thoughts of many others in the industry when he said, "You must understand that the businessman does not wish to antagonize anybody—even the bigots." That advertisers and agencies were wary of offending the sensibilities of mainstream consumers was clearly evidenced by the lack of corporate sponsorship for the broadcast of the 1963 March on Washington. Television networks broadcast the march by paying all production costs themselves when sponsorship could not be
located. No advertisers seemed to want their products associated with the controversial march.\textsuperscript{14}

While sponsors sought to stay away from potentially image—and product—damaging events the pressure from some whites remained on advertisers and agencies. Still, by far the greatest pressure for changes in advertising came from black consumers and their representatives. Advertisers and agencies, many of whom had begun to increase their recognition and efforts to attract blacks consumers, were confronted with a black consumer population that had transitioned from the one to which they had been introduced. Black consumers were making greater and more vocal demands for inclusion and for a changed approach.

John Johnson, who now stood as the single most powerful black publisher in the nation, told agency representatives, “What Negro consumers want now is a recognition of their humanity and an industry wide respect for the Negro image... No Negro consumer asks for more; few, if any, Negro consumers are willing to accept less.”\textsuperscript{15} Johnson argued that black consumers were now demanding that advertising take greater steps to present images of their lives both as they were and as they desired them to be. He noted that for some agencies that this transition would elicit a small change in advertising copy or in a company’s sales strategy. For others, though, it would mean a complete reevaluation of the product and the product’s meaning to blacks within the context of their history and current struggle. He emphasized,

\begin{quote}
By meeting Negro consumers halfway, by recognizing their increasing sensitivity to images and symbols and by decreasing their feeling of
\end{quote}
isolation from the mainstream, advertisers help not only themselves but America. To improve the image of the Negro in the white community, to improve the image of the 'white' company and the image of the Negro buyer, to lift aspirations and hopes and to give all Americans more worthwhile goals and desires: These are the crucial challenges of the hour.16

Johnson called for those in the advertising industry to involve themselves and their persuasive expertise to help the country adjust to the changes being generated by the civil rights revolution. He told representatives that the country needed their communicative skill to help all citizens work through the changes. Thus an adjustment to the way in which blacks were utilized in advertisements went beyond the sale of products and to the realm of image projection. Moreover, blacks as a consumer group were no longer willing to sit by and accept their purchasing power being ignored by advertisers. Instead, he claimed that there was a new black consumer on the scene. This new consumer was "no Uncle Tom shuffling down to the corner store for grits and chittlins." Instead, the new consumer was "trim, well-groomed, and militant." He or she was one who would see their desires taken into account by advertisers or they would use their consumer power to show their displeasure. Johnson, although he did not say so openly, warned advertisers that the potential for a large-scale boycott by black consumers was a possibility.17

Johnson and others informed the leaders of the major advertising agencies that the civil rights movement was causing changes that they would have to deal with to continue to market effectively to blacks. Some also noted that the agencies had no one but themselves to blame for these changes. S.I. Hayakawa, professor of English at San Francisco College, argued that the civil
rights protests were fed by television and advertising. He reasoned that a large portion of the protest action was the result of black teenagers realizing that there was a significant disparity between real-life and the world portrayed by advertisements. Black teenagers were reacting to the discovery that “the culture [was] not willing to live up to its advertising.” Hayakawa’s comments elicited a number of responses from agency workers in the trade press. Some in the press were supportive of his arguments but many more were not. Nonetheless, his comments initiated a discourse among persons in the advertising industry who questioned the role of their work in both causing and relieving the racial unrest.

Hayakawa was not the only one to argue that advertising had played a role in the racial unrest. Others, like Johnson, argued that advertising had helped inspire the civil rights movement. He stated, “Stimulated by the bright vision projected by the American advertising community and angered by their obvious exclusion from crucial parts of that vision, Negro consumers are raising new demands for fair play in the American marketplace.” Myrlie Evers, wife of slain civil rights leader Medgar Evers, echoed Johnson’s argument,

Nearly any movie, almost any page of Life magazine, the advertising on the billboards and in the newspapers, most of what we see each day on television—all of these constitute a kind of torture to many Negroes. For they know that this, or something like it, is what awaits the American who is willing to work for it—unless he is a Negro. American advertising is responsible for much of the Negro’s current demand that he, too, be allowed to participate in the fulfillment of the American dream.

Where Hayakawa had criticized commercials for their role in the civil rights movement, Newsweek editor Osborn Elliot saw elements worth of praise.
Speaking before a group of agency executives, Elliot reasoned, "I would submit that in a very real sense this social revolution has been inspired by the advertising business. For every time you buy space or time, you advertise the benefits of the white society. The Negroes want to share this life. They want to join the affluent society, not overthrow it." While both Johnson's and Elliot's arguments rejected any notion of black agency to create their own vision of the American dream, they also reflected the impact of advertising's exclusion of black Americans. African-Americans were reacting to the exclusion, by demanding greater levels of inclusion within the nation's social, political, and economic life. Furthermore, they were demanding that advertising images reflect their desires for inclusion.

Lee Loevinger, Federal Communications Commissioner, combined the arguments of Hayakawa, Johnson, Elliot, and others on advertising and civil rights into the "Loevinger Theory." Loevinger argued that advertisements had done more to advance the civil rights revolution than had any of the court decisions. Americans gained a substantial part of their education through television. Commercials, though, unlike the television programs, contained an element of reality that the programs lacked. He reasoned that commercials presented a vision of luxury that contrasted with the harsh reality of many peoples' everyday lives. While a viewer could dismiss the world of the television program as fictional, the commercials held out an array of products to which viewers had access and could not easily dismiss. A viewer might not be able to go to California and visit the Beverly Hillbillies, but that same viewer could go to a
car dealership and look at a Cadillac. The result was that commercials encouraged people to strive to improve their material condition. For African-Americans Loevinger reasoned, this striving was being expressed in the form of street demonstrations.\(^\text{23}\)

Although, as Weems has shown, Loevinger was misguided in his elevation of commercials over civil rights accomplishments, he nonetheless addressed the power of commercials to encourage change.\(^\text{24}\) Activists subsequently utilized elements of this argument during their efforts to press the advertising industry into more representative images of blacks. Advertisements, activists argued, could be used not only to sell products, but also could present an image indicating that blacks were an important part of the nation's life. Activists were aided in this effort by the rumblings for change emanating from many different segments of the black consumer population.

**Market Segmentation and the Black Consumer Market**

In the early 1960s, there was a resurgence of an overlooked marketing theory—market segmentation. Advocates of market segmentation argued that the general marketplace could be broken into subsets that allowed for more targeted sales messages and greater product sales. Ultimately, these arguments enhanced the notion of the separate African-American market. To recognize the viability inherent in advertising to one specialized segment supported the notion that there were several such potential segments. One such clearly identifiable segment was that which made up the black consumer market.\(^\text{25}\)
In 1960, James Boynton, vice-president and advertising director for Fawcett Publications, argued that the "era of the specialized market is dawning." Boynton reasoned that the development of market segments allowed an advertiser to develop a market more intensively than if he or she simply aimed at the mass of consumers. Although Boynton's arguments seemed new to some in the trade press, a similar argument had been in place regarding the black consumer market for years. As early as the 1920s black businessmen and publishers had informed advertisers and agencies that taking more careful aim at soliciting the black consumer could lead to greater sales. When Clarence Holte was hired as a special marketer at Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborne (BBDO) in the 1950s, the reason given for his employment was to take "greater aim" at the black consumer market. Others characterized the focus on black consumers as aiming at a market with a rifle instead of a shotgun. What Boynton did in 1960, perhaps knowingly, perhaps not, was to take an argument that had been made regarding one specialized market and apply it broadly to the general marketplace. Not only was there one specialized market—black consumers—but there were potentially tens, if not hundreds, of them.26

Other company executives voiced similar arguments as executives began to view market segments as a viable sales alternative. Reporters in the trade press also began to elucidate the sales possibilities of market segmentation. A few weeks after Boynton's speech, a writer with Advertising Age, voiced support for the idea of market segmentation. He pointed out that as the general market grew it was inevitable that "splinter groups" with tastes counter to those of the mass
would emerge. He cautioned agencies not to ignore these groups based on their small numbers because, in a competitive market place, they could lead to increased sales and market leadership.27

Writers at Sales Management advanced the argument even further by compiling a list of anticipated consumer trends for the 1960s. One of the major trends they predicted was the development of specialized markets, including the black consumer market. Researchers argued that marketers needed to develop specialized products and promotions to reach segmented markets. Advertising would had to be devised in a way that could tell "each consumer interest group why that version of the product is especially for them." Advertisers and agencies were informed they could no longer develop products and advertising campaigns that aimed only at the mass. Instead, had to work even harder to appeal to the specialized market and stay competitive. The author cautioned, "The company which chooses to try for the biggest possible mass audience, or which, indeed, attempts to treat specialization solely as a marketing tool for its own use, may wind up being forced into a very special [emphasis in original] kind of oblivion."28

As the decade continued, the idea of segmented markets and the need for more specialized levels of marketing grew. In a 1962 article in Dun's Review, a well-regarded marketing periodical, a writer called the transformation of the mass market into specialized segments "revolutionary." The single market, which was likely a misnomer in the first place, had "exploded into a series of segmented, fragmented markets, each with its own needs, tastes, and way of life."29 Advertisers and agencies had either to adjust to this new reality or face
obsolescence. The members of the advertising community were being called to
do nothing less than completely reorient their conceptions and assumptions of
what exactly the mass market was. It was not one large group of people as
much as it was a large grouping of smaller sections that were more than the sum
of their parts. \(^{30}\)

As analysts for trade journals continued to dissect the mass market and to
analyze the black consumer market, the potential impact of the latter became
increasingly clear. There was no other subset of the American mass market that
was as concentrated or as wealthy as African-Americans. Blacks were
concentrated in the nation's cities, and they had the consumer power to force
either success or failure upon many marketing campaigns. Also, as one writer
for *Sales Management* noted, "no other section is so deaf to general advertising
appeals—or so responsive to special invitation." \(^{31}\) Blacks were to many the
textbook market segment.

Moreover, the concept of market segmentation helped to transform the
concept of the black consumer market. As ideas of market segmentation spread
within the advertising community the black consumer market was changed from
a "special" market to being simply one of the individual communities that made
up the mass market. In other words, the black consumer market was no more or
less legitimate a sales target that the youth, housewife, or sports market. Also,
the black consumer market had all of the features of the other individual markets.
It was a segmented market, but it was, in its own way, a general market as well.
Just as one could not design effective advertising campaigns to reach the whole
of the mass market, one had to design pinpointed campaigns to reach segments of the black consumer market. The black consumer market was on its way to becoming "an important basic market which needs its own special approach." The question that remained, however, in light of the rapid social changes going on among blacks, how to successfully reach out to that segment.\textsuperscript{32}

\textit{The New Black Consumer}

Persons who were closely involved in advertising and marketing to the black consumer market noted the changes within their segment of the marketplace. These men and women analyzed the changes and interpreted their meaning for the advertising industry. H. Naylor Fitzhugh, vice-president of special markets for Pepsi-Cola, argued that for African-Americans, consumerism was filtered through the lens of race. Fitzhugh and others reasoned that if race were removed, persons of similar socio-economic class would likely buy the same sorts of products and largely for the same reasons. With the addition of the racial factors, though, blacks and whites of similar socio-economic class might buy the same products, but their motives for doing so differed. Fitzhugh contended that blacks had a different set of purchasing motivations than whites that had to be understood and tapped in order to earn their business. Without proper understanding of those motivations, blacks would be alienated from, rather than drawn toward, the products of a company.\textsuperscript{33}

Confronted with a group of consumers, who clearly had the money and desire to purchase, the leaders of advertising agencies were in a quandary. On one
hand, agency officials did not want to offend the masses of white consumers who controlled a large amount of purchasing power. But on the other hand, they did not want to alienate black consumers either. The black consumer market, a reporter concluded, was “both a lure and a club.” The market was a lure in the tremendous profits available; a club in the profits to be missed if the market were not approached accordingly. As one black consumer market expert noted, “The new Negro consumer is demanding that his hopes, fears, needs and dreams be considered.” Furthermore, he warned advertisers that the new black consumer, “cannot be sold by advertisements and articles which take him for granted.”

In an effort to quantify blacks' motivations for purchasing, the Center for Research in Marketing surveyed a group of black consumers as to their non-economic reasons for purchasing. Researchers found that, contrary to prevailing opinion, blacks did not purchase products to get attention from others. Table 3.1 illustrates some of the results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Percent in Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improving Yourself</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving Up in the World</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Life Easier</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impressing Friends</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impressing the Boss</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Life Richer</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting What One Deserves</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying New Things</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*There were multiple answers given and the results will add up to more than 100 percent.*

Table 3.1: Center for Research in Marketing Black Purchasing Survey

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While Center researchers did not conclusively analyze their results, a number of the categories given could be taken to be "status"-based reasons for purchasing. Reasons such as: improving yourself, moving up in the world, impressing friends, impressing the boss, making life richer, and getting what one deserves, were potential ways in which respondents could have attempted to improve their status or to attract attention.

Regardless of blacks' objective reasoning, however, what was clear from the study was that blacks had as many and as complex a set of reasons for purchases, as did whites. Therefore to reach this new, complex consumer, advertisers and agencies would have to adjust their sights or face lower profits in the black consumer market. Johnson, Fitzhugh and others, informed advertisers that to the new black consumer goods had to be positioned not only to be symbols of status, but also of racial progress. While the subjective motivations for purchasing could not be statistically quantified advertisers and agencies were told that the "feeling" and "spirit" of the black consumer community had changed. Advertisers now had to establish more than a utilitarian value for their products. It was no longer enough to say what things a product could do or what its purposes were. Instead, both the product and the company needed positioned in regards to its support in blacks' fight for equality. As Fitzhugh had concluded, advertisements directed to the black community now had to convey a respect for blacks' human dignity.36

This shift to a new, complex vision of the black consumer was a clear break from the conception of previous years. In the 1950s, advertisers and agencies
assumed that blacks wanted to be white, or that blacks were simply dark-skinned white people. Blacks had the same tastes and desires and, therefore, all an advertiser had to do was use black media to reach black consumers. Or, since black consumers wanted to be white, to utilize the light skinned black models in their ads.37 Agency personnel were told that copy could remain the same, but the use of black-oriented magazines and radio shows was enough of an invitation to encourage black patronage.

Furthermore, some black consultants argued that blacks resented being singled out in advertisements. Blacks, they contended, wanted to assimilate in the world of products as they did in everyday society. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, however, blacks willingness to be identified as blacks increased. Thus there was an increase in the use of dark-skinned black models with clearly "Negroid" features. Blacks’ willingness to be identified reached into the world of commercial goods as blacks used their economic power to force employment changes in corporations and in the manner in which they were approached in advertisements. The developing sense of racial pride visible in black Americans forced agencies to begin to adapt their work to reflect those changes.38

Yet given the social changes ongoing in the nation, some blacks and whites in the advertising community questioned if the African-American consumer market would even exist in future years. The successes of the civil rights movement led them to believe that African-Americans would eventually assimilate and fade completely into mainstream society. As blacks integrated into the fabric of
America the need to have separate sales programs for the black consumer market would disappear as well. The first major disagreement over the future of the black consumer market came in 1966 during an NAMD convention.

During a presentation at the NAMD convention, Sam White, vice-president of marketing for Ligget & Myers, asserted, "We look to the day when the Negro market will disappear as the Jewish market has disappeared. And I'll tell you it is disappearing, rapidly, at least in our product category." White further argued that as the black consumer market assimilated into the mainstream market there would be little need for special appeals or for the utilization of black media forms.

A few moments after the conclusion of his presentation, White's comments evoked a heated response from the black advertising and marketing representatives in the audience. Some, like Clarence Holte, responded that White's research was erroneous and that black buying habits, regardless of assimilation levels, were (and potentially would always be) different from whites. Others, like Leonard Evans argued that extending recognition to black consumers meant continued loyalty of those consumers. Furthermore, he argued that White had completely misread the meaning of the civil rights movement. Whereas White saw the movement as leading to the day when the black market would disappear through assimilation, Evans cautioned that something different was happening. Evans noted, "We have no great desire to become white. In fact, we tend to have more pride than ever in being Negroes. Integration does not mean the elimination of Negro culture." It was black
culture, Evans reasoned, that led to the different purchasing motivations between blacks and whites and that the culture would have to continually be understood and tapped in order to effectively market to blacks. Evans concluded that blacks had a new sense of pride to which marketers would either have to adjust or face sales repercussions.42

_Academic Research and the Black Consumer_

Sam White's opinion as to the disappearance of the black consumer market was a minority position in the decade. Those who discussed the black consumer market did so with the assumption that it would be a permanent fixture on the American scene. The question that remained, however, was how to market effectively to black consumers. Beyond the approaches that would be advocated by black marketing experts, a number of academic researchers sought to provide analysis of the market and to inform approaches to reach it. One such study, “The Marketing Dilemma of Negroes,” by Harvard business professor Raymond Bauer, was published in the _Journal of Marketing_ in 1965. Bauer argued that blacks did not constitute a monolithic consumer group. Instead, one could not approach wealthy black consumers with the same appeals that one use with working-class blacks. Bauer argued that the black consumer market was split between “strivers” and “non-strivers.” Bauer reasoned that as a group blacks had “accepted the values of the majority white middle-class culture.” Those blacks who chose to try to reach those standards (as measured by consumer goods) of middle class whites, he labeled as strivers. Those who chose to ignore the standards and not try to reach them, he labeled as non-strivers. Bauer
reasoned, "The distinctive nature of the Negro revolution is that it is not a revolution to overthrow the established order so much as it is a revolution to achieve full membership in that order. Because material goods have such an important symbolic role in American society, the acquisition of material goods should be symbolic to the Negro of his achievement of full status." 43

Bauer's analysis of the importance of material goods to African-Americans quest for full citizenship was correct. As Weems has shown, consumer equality was part of blacks' ultimate quest for full rights and inclusion in America. Yet while his analysis was in the tradition of existing social science, he did not allow for blacks to have the agency to create and strive for their own standards completely separate for those dictated by white society. In fact, the definition of exactly what constituted "white middle class values" was never offered. In a separate article, Bauer defined white middle class values as "...the freedom to move about—in housing, in travel, and in admittance to public and private facilities; the freedom of opportunity in private and public employment; the ability to express opinions and have a say in decision making processes; the power of education; and the desire for the material goods which represent well-being and status for white America." 44 Upon close inspection it is virtually impossible to completely assign Bauer's list of values to any single racial or ethnic group as much as they represent an overall list of American values. Bauer concluded that blacks were more concerned with the symbolic value of goods that were whites. Because of their struggle for recognition and equality, blacks placed emphasis on affiliation with the number-one brand of certain types of product—those taken to

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convey a certain level of status. Products such as cars or expensive alcohol could give one the same level of societal status as the product. In effect, Cadillac cars mattered, the number one brand of facial tissue did not. Nonetheless, his arguments provided important evidence for current market researchers that there was no monolithic way to approach black consumers. Hence Bauer pointed the way to a more nuanced approach to the black consumer market.45

In a study published in *Journalism Quarterly*, Dave Berkman noted that the acquisition of material goods by blacks did not indicate a desire to be white. Instead, blacks wanted "to be a middle-class Negro; but for right now, and for as long as the two are, to a large degree, essentially contradictions in terms, he will find most appealing those items whose consumption most clearly says 'white'—*but only because they also say 'middle-class'* [emphasis in original]."46 Hence blacks desired to reach a certain socio-economic level, but not to necessarily alter their racial identity. African-Americans wanted to be middle class, he surmised, but their vision of middle class a uniquely black one. In it was free of racial restrictions. Advertising to black consumers, Berkman implied, now had to begin to not only reflect blacks' reality, but also their aspirations.47

The proliferation of research into black consumers was one part of the changed perception of the black consumer market. Black consultants and the members of the trade press also played important roles. Consequently, by the mid-1960s a number of major companies were either engaged in, or were designing some sort of program to reach the black consumer market.

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Nevertheless, many executives wanted their marketing efforts to blacks to be more effective. Even among companies that had long been active in the black consumer market, corporate leaders were unsure what to make of the black consumers of the 1960s. The rapid social and political changes of the decade, combined with the increased employment of and income of blacks, the growth of a black middle-class, and the rising militancy of activists left advertisers and agencies in a quandary. Said one Sponsor writer, “The Negro market today is probably the least understood, most controversial, and yet most promising consumer group in the nation.” Moreover, during the 1960s, advertisers found themselves up against the most powerful tool controlled by black consumers—the product boycott. Blacks were increasingly willing to use this power to force desired changes upon the nation’s corporations—and far more then in earlier periods, their results seemed to be effective.

**Forcing Change**

Although there had been a number of instances of African-American economic boycotts in the past, those that occurred in the 1960s had broader goals. In previous years boycotts had been focused on fairer treatment of consumers or the opening up of general employment opportunities to African-Americans. During the 1960s many African-American consumers waged a more focused campaign. Now, rather than demands for basic employment, blacks demanded that white-collar jobs be opened to them. The largest campaign, and the one that put American companies on notice that blacks' expectations for a return on their consumer support had evolved, occurred in Philadelphia.
In 1960, in Philadelphia a group of 400 black ministers organized a campaign to encourage area companies to employ more blacks in white-collar positions. Ministers utilized the term "selective patronage" to describe the effort rather than "boycott" because they felt it conveyed a more positive image than boycott. Blacks comprised over 27 percent of the population of Philadelphia but occupied less than 1 percent of the white-collar jobs in private industry. Leon Sullivan, a minister involved in the program, noted, "You could walk Walnut Street and Chestnut Street in Philadelphia and you would hardly see a colored girl walk out of an office building with a job of any sensitive nature. Just a handful hired as tokens of some symbol, an effort of some company to appease its conscience." The campaign did not have a centralized leadership board, but each minister spoke to his congregation informing them of the campaign. Taken together, the 400 ministers could reach approximately 250,000 people every Sunday. The program was also given attention in the black newspaper and, therefore, reached out to those who did not attend church services.

Over a one-year period, the campaign targeted a number of companies, including Tasty Baking, Pepsi-Cola, Sun Oil, and Gulf Oil. These companies all had black employees in their production areas, but they had few blacks employed in sales, secretarial, or other white-collar areas of the company. Hence each company, even those such as Pepsi-Cola, whose executives believed that their past courting of black consumers had made them "friends of the Negro," were targeted by the program.
To initiate a move against a company, the ministers first found out how many blacks were employed there and in what positions. Illustrative of the level of community participation, they did so by having members of their congregations who worked as janitors or in other capacities for the company count the number and position of blacks and report back. A committee of ministers then took that information to company executives and made their employment requests. The ministers insisted that no whites be displaced to employ blacks but asked that blacks be given either currently open, or newly created, positions. Some companies, like Sun Oil, tried to resist the employment requests. If a company chose this course of action, the ministers would inform their members not to buy that company's products again until told to do so. This tactic was extremely effective as those companies who chose a hard-line against the campaign were forced to capitulate due to heavy sales losses. Other companies, like Pepsi-Cola, cooperated voluntarily and increased the numbers of blacks in the requested positions. Ministers credited the campaign with greatly increasing the number of black professionals employed around the city.\(^54\)

The Philadelphia campaign signaled to advertisers that their employment policies were now an important part of their success in reaching black consumers. Clarence Holte noted, "If an employer has an unfair employment policy, and it's known to Negroes, he can advertise, he can promote, he can do anything he wants to, and he won't sell merchandise."\(^55\) Harvey Russell, black vice-president of special markets for Pepsi-Cola, went even further, calling employment the "fourth dimension" of a marketing program. He noted, "Negroes
tend to support companies which employ Negroes and no matter how great your advertising budget for a special market may be, you won't get that market unless there is concrete evidence that employment opportunities are available. Furthermore, “Integration in employment and advertising to the Negro market go hand-in-hand, but of the two approaches integration in employment may be more effective.”

Russell had ample evidence to support his arguments regarding integration because Pepsi-Cola had experienced increased sales in the black community when his appointment was announced. In 1961, Russell became the first black vice-president of a multi-national firm, and his appointment was given a good deal of attention in the trade press. Conversely, his appointment also caused a short boycott of Pepsi-Cola by the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan, believing that Russell’s fair-skinned wife was in fact white, circulated a series of handbills with pictures of Russell and his wife with the heading “The saddest story ever told.” The text of the handbill encouraged readers to boycott the company in order to “Let the Pepsi-Cola people know what you think of that vice-president and his white wife.” As the boycott spread through the Southern states Pepsi lost some sales among white customers. Eventually the crisis was defused as the racial background of Russell’s wife was made public. Nevertheless, the crisis also showed that the employment of blacks in corporate positions was important not only to black consumers but to some white consumers as well.

The Philadelphia campaign was only one of a number of black consumer boycotts in the 1960s. Accordingly, the various consumer efforts caught the
attention of market researchers. In 1963, the Center for Research in Marketing conducted a study of the potential impact of a black consumer boycott. After surveying 180,000 blacks in 15 states, researchers concluded that 90 percent of African-Americans would support a product boycott if asked to do so by leaders of one of the major civil rights organizations. These organizations included: the NAACP, National Urban League, Congress of Racial Equality, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, or Negro American Labor Council. The study indicated that, given the success of local campaigns such as that waged in Philadelphia, a black consumer boycott on the national level could be large enough to inflict heavy profit losses on a targeted company. The study also indicated that the major civil rights organizations not only could use moral outrage to force social change, but that they could also, if necessary, use black consumer power to force economic changes.61

Yet even before civil rights groups and government organizations became involved in pressing the race issue in advertising, there were some blacks in mainstream agencies. In the early 1960s there were a few African-Americans who occupied creative or executive level positions in any major advertising agency. Men such as Leonard Evans, Clarence Holte, and others, maintained the sort of public profile that went with being one of the few in their area of work. Their opinions and activities were covered, especially in articles on the black consumer, and as such experts they were known figures within the industry.
But there was also another group of African-Americans within the mainstream advertising agency—black men and women who worked on accounts for the general market. These were persons—like Roy Eaton—whose experience and qualifications allowed them to maintain positions beyond the black consumer market. Although such individuals were rare, some became an important part of increasing the number of African-Americans within the advertising industry.

*Before the Pressure: Blacks in the Advertising Industry*

*Blacks in Mainstream Agencies*

*Georg Olden*

Like many others in the advertising business, Georg (pronounced "George") Olden had come to the trade from another industry. At one time Olden had been the director of graphic arts for CBS Television. He had arrived at CBS after the Second World War, during which he had worked as a graphic designer in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). While at CBS, Olden was a successful and recognized art director. He had won a number of awards for his television work, and he had some high profile projects on which he worked in his private time, including the design of the commemorative stamp for the Emancipation Proclamation. Olden had also created cartoons that were published in the *New Yorker* (during which time he had dropped the ‘e’ off of his first name in order to garner more attention). He also had the distinction of being one of the first African-Americans pictured in an integrated advertisement. In 1951, he was featured in one of the Calvert Distillers “Men of Distinction” advertisements. The ad pictured Olden at work at CBS with white colleagues and at home sitting in a
plush chair (wearing a smoking jacket and ascot no less) talking with a friend. The ad presented Olden as a man for consumers to emulate, if not professionally, then at least in their choice of alcoholic beverage.62

In 1960, Olden decided that he wanted to make a career change from television into the advertising industry. His reputation from his work at CBS was such that, within a few hours of making his desires known to a friend in the industry, he had job offers from three agencies. He chose to join Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborn (BBDO) as the TV Group Art Supervisor. Olden’s position required him to be involved in all facets of a commercial production. The role gave him a degree of creative freedom that few other blacks on the “Avenue” could match. Olden worked on a number of accounts for clients such as Lucky Strike, Bromo Seltzer, Pepsi-Cola, Chrysler, General Electric, and U.S. Steel. His role also required him to work on accounts for the general marketplace, rather than the black consumer market. Olden said, “I find the advertising agency industry very exciting to work in because of the wide variety of accounts on which I work and because of the many facets of production in which I am involved, such as music, cinematography, film animation, scenic design, and the casting of actors, actresses and models.”63 Perhaps the only other African-American in advertising with this level of freedom was Roy Eaton. However, even Eaton lacked the wide degree of influence within his agency that Olden wielded. Both Eaton and Olden shared the distinction of having a level of skill and experience that few others of any racial persuasion could match.
Consequently, the two men had a level of creative freedom and access to multiple types of advertising campaigns that few other blacks in the industry could match.\textsuperscript{64}

Olden spent three years at BBDO and then moved on to become vice-president and senior art director at McCann-Erickson, a position he held until 1969, when he left the industry. Although he was one of the highest-ranking blacks in the advertising industry, Olden was not involved in efforts to bring other blacks into the agency business. He stated, “My own experience has been entirely removed from race.”\textsuperscript{65} Instead of emphasizing race, Olden emphasized that his own success came as a result of his talent and hard work. Therefore, other people, regardless of color, who desired to enter the agency business, would have to exhibit a similar degree of talent and skill.\textsuperscript{66}

The factor that Olden overlooked in his advancement was that his talent was combined with a degree of opportunity and timing that many others, especially blacks, did not have. In the early 1940s, his artistic work had drawn the attention of someone at the OSS. That unnamed person was responsible for his entering the wartime agency. While with the OSS, Olden's work was utilized in top-secret presentations used to brief high-ranking officials, including president Franklin D. Roosevelt. After the war, when a fellow OSS officer, Larry Lowman, returned to CBS, he made sure that Olden gained a position with the network as well. Consequently, at only 24 years of age, with virtually no experience in television, Olden was placed in charge of all of the artwork and graphic designs for CBS. From this position his talent and hard work carried him to the various positions he
held at CBS and in the advertising industry. However, it was his connections to important people within the media industries that had even allowed him the opportunity to display his talent.67

Bill Sharp

Bill Sharp began his advertising career in Chicago as owner of a company called Card Gifter's. The company began with a personalized greeting card operation that Sharp later expanded to include an advertising and promotion function. Sharp's entry into the advertising agency business came about in part because of the input of his cousin, Tom Burrell. In 1961, Burrell became the first black person hired by Wade Advertising in Chicago, home of the Speedy Alka Seltzer account, when he got a job in the mailroom. One of the requirements of his job was that he open all mail not marked "personal" and deliver it to the necessary person. During the course of his employment, Burrell began to get a better understanding of how an advertising agency worked, including the various specialties that made up an agency such as copywriter, art director, and account executive. One of the things that Burrell did upon securing this knowledge—after requesting the opportunity to be trained as a copywriter himself—was to inform Sharp of these agency functions. After conversations with Burrell, Sharp was convinced that he had the skills needed to run an agency. Therefore, he changed the name of his company to Card, Gifter's and Sharp so as to better "sound like" an advertising agency. Then, using the client base he had already established, Sharp began completing a variety of local and regional advertising assignments.68
Sharp ran his advertising agency for seven years, accumulating a solid base of local and regional clients. He reached the point, however, that he believed that he had gained as much advertising knowledge on his own as was possible. Therefore he made the decision to focus on gaining more of an education in the agency business, even though working for another company would mean a dramatic decrease in personal income. During a conversation with Burrell, Sharp expressed a desire to learn more about the agency business as well as the desire to join an agency. Burrell, who by this point had become a copywriter at Wade Advertising, introduced Sharp to Robert Ross, an executive with Leo Burnett Advertising. After an initial meeting, Ross evaluated Sharp’s writing abilities and suggested that he look for work as a copywriter. He also helped Sharp put together his sample book, the body of work used by prospective copywriters to obtain employment. Eventually, Ross became Sharp’s mentor and helped him navigate his way through the advertising industry. Having this connection to an established professional like Ross aided Sharp by giving him access to a critical and experienced evaluator for his work. Having access to Ross also gave Sharp an advisor on how to situate himself to successfully land a position in the industry.69

Despite Ross’s help, however, Sharp found preparing his sample book to get a job much easier than obtaining a position. In the Chicago advertising world of the early 1960s, there were very few black professionals working in mainstream agencies. Although there were a number of black clerks, secretaries, and mailroom attendants, black copywriters or art directors were scarce. When
interviewing, Sharp found what many blacks who applied at mainstream agencies did: although his interviewers were cordial, he was repeatedly told that there were no openings available. He spent three years interviewing for copywriter positions until he was hired at Tatham Laird & Kudner in early 1964.\textsuperscript{70}

Sharp spent two years at the Tatham agency, but left in order to continue to develop his experience as a copywriter. In 1966, he joined the Leo Burnett agency as a copy supervisor, a professional step up from his position at Tatham. During his time at both Tatham and Burnett, Sharp worked on accounts for the general market. Neither firm had clients active in the black consumer market, and Sharp was therefore used where needed, rather than being limited to the black consumer market.\textsuperscript{71}

After nearly three years with Burnett, Sharp moved on to become Group Creative Supervisor at J. Walter Thompson Advertising. While at Thompson, Sharp was in charge of product advertising for clients such as Better Homes and Gardens, Simoniz, and Sears. His position made him one of the highest-ranking blacks in the advertising industry. Unlike Georg Olden, however, Sharp sought to use his position to work publicly to increase the number of blacks in the agency business. In 1966, he became involved in the development of the Basic Advertising Course (see chapter 4). Also, in 1969, he published a book entitled, \textit{How to Be Black and Get A Job in the Advertising Agency Business Anyway}. In this book he analyzed the structure of an advertising agency and detailed exactly what steps blacks could take to prepare themselves for employment in an
advertising agency. Hence during the late-1960s, Sharp was in the forefront of those pressing for greater inclusion of African-Americans in the agency business.\textsuperscript{72}

After three years at Thompson, Sharp moved to a position in government as the communications director at the Office of Economic Opportunity. After two years in government, he moved on to become the vice-president and advertising manager for Coca-Cola, USA. At Coca-Cola, Sharp managed advertising for all of the domestic soft drink brands. Also, while he was with Coke, he served as the chairman of the American Advertising Federation, becoming the first African-American to head a major advertising group. After several years with Coke, Sharp left to run the Atlanta office for Tom Burrell Advertising and later would again become owner of his own firm. Sharp continued to work for himself until he retired in 1998.\textsuperscript{73}

Sharp's experiences illustrate the importance of connections and experience in the agency business. For persons working in the creative side of advertising, advancement was tied to one's talent and level of experience. The primary way to gain that experience was through working on different sorts of products that could then be used to enhance one's sample book and lead to job advancement. To work on different types of products, however, often necessitated moving to a variety of advertising agencies. Black professionals, Sharp being one of the exceptions, often lacked the professional mobility whites had. Sharp recalled, "I was always treated like I was the exception."\textsuperscript{74} Blacks, recognizing the precarious nature of their existence in the advertising field, were loath to exhibit a
desire to leave their current job for fear of being shown the door. Thus one of the
primary means to experience and advancement—job mobility—was one of the
very things implicitly denied to blacks in the industry. To help increase
opportunities, Sharp and other blacks in the industry later started training courses
and pressed for increased recruitment efforts. They were aided in these efforts
by pressure outside the advertising industry generated by some of the nation’s
major civil rights groups who had turned their attention to the media industries.75

**Conclusion**

By the early 1960s, leaders of most of the major agencies were aware of the
existence black consumer market. Yet at the same time that the market gained
some legitimacy, executives were told that the market was changing. As the civil
rights movement gathered steam, the social changes that the protests generated
transformed black consumers. Blacks, executives learned, now sought
employment opportunities along with realistic advertising appeals. Consequently
advertisers and agencies slowly began to initiate campaigns to reach the black
consumer market. But simultaneously, advertisers and agencies learned that
some whites wanted to alter the images that they found offensive. In short, the
advertising industry became a battleground over contested images as both
whites and blacks sought to temper the products of the industry. Yet it was to be
black who waged a sustained effort against the industry to ensure that
advertising practitioners approached and presented black consumers in a more
realistic and respectful manner. Moreover black activists found important allies in
governmental organizations that also began to press the advertising executives to present more racially inclusive images and to actively seek blacks for agency employment.\textsuperscript{76}
Notes


4 There are few book length analyses of the adaptations that the advertising industry made to the various social crises of the 1960s. Two of the more recent are Thomas C. Franke, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) and Hazel G. Warlaumont, *Advertising in the 60s: Turncoats, Traditionalists, and Waste Makers in America's Turbulent Decade* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001). Although neither work addresses the impact of the racial revolution on the industry, each does an adequate job of analyzing the impact of other social changes on the advertising industry.


“Negro Market Will Be Controlling Factor in Profit Margins of Big U.S. Companies in 15 Years: Johnson,” *Advertising Age* (September 21, 1964): 120.


Mrs. Medgar Evers with William Peters, *For Us, the Living* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1967), 32

“Hayakawa Appears to Criticize TV Ads,” 62.


On the importance of civil rights accomplishments over consumer goods see Weems, 94-107.


Ibid.

Helena Brooks, head of a firm specializing in ethnic models recalled that in the 1950s model calls for advertising work were foromen with "medium skin tones and a Caucasian look. Advertisers, even though products were in black-oriented magazines, wanted the least "Negroid" blacks possible. On issues of skin tones in model choices see "TV: A 'New Force' in Selling to U.S. Negroes," Sponsor (August 17, 1964): 45.


Bauer, "The Marketing Dilemma of Negroes," 2-6. Also blacks often bought brand name goods as a way to assure themselves of receiving a quality purchase see Grace Elizabeth Hale, Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940 (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 121-355;


Ibid., 60-67.


The Montgomery Bus Boycott was perhaps the most famous in the modern civil rights era when black consumers used their economic power to force social changes upon a company and a city. Even before the Montgomery campaign, blacks had a history of using economic power for social change in campaigns like the "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work," programs of the 1930s and 40s. On black consumer activism predating the civil rights movement see Robert Weems,

Gibson, 22.

Ibid., 20-26.

Ibid.


Shaw, 1.


Ku Klux Klan Handbill, The Pepsi-Cola Papers (hereafter Pepsi-Cola Papers), Series 2; Box 13, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Harvey Russell to Allan Morrision, July 22, 1965, Pepsi-Cola Papers, Series 2; Box 13, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; "KKK Thinks Pepsi's Negro Veep's Wife is White," Jet (July 1965): 50. There is no indication of the impact Russell's appointment had on sales among whites who were not part of the boycotts. Also, there is no information on whites who may have been sympathetic to the cause of increased employment opportunities for blacks and indicated that sympathy by purchasing Pepsi over other soda products.


"Olden is An Art Supervisor at Madison Avenue Agency," Ebony (November 1960): 80-84. The "Men of Distinction" advertisements often featured integrated scenes, but they were only published in black-oriented magazines. See Calvert Distillers, advertisement, Our World (October 1951): 5.

"Olden is An Art Supervisor at Madison Avenue Agency," 83.
Given his claim to have advanced regardless of his race, it was ironic that when Olden was fired from McCann Erickson in 1969, he would claim that it was on account of his race and he would file an unsuccessful employment discrimination lawsuit (see Chapter 5).


Sharp, interview by author.

Bill Sharp, interview by author.

On the advertising industry and the civil rights movement see Kern Foxworth, 39-41 and 115-117.
CHAPTER 4 – 1960-1967

Civil Rights Groups and the Advertising Industry

Starting in the 1960s the war over the African-American image as projected by the advertising industry escalated. Leaders of the advertising industry found themselves among the targets of a set of campaigns waged by civil rights organizations against the nation's image producing industries. The Urban League, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) campaigned to persuade leaders of the media industries to move blacks out of the status of "the invisible man." While these were not jointly run campaigns, members of each group shared information about their successes and failures with members of the others. Furthermore, the civil rights groups did not act alone. Instead, each was supported by a variety of white religious, civic, and labor groups.¹

Industry leaders were the targets of activists because of the perceived role of advertising in maintaining the negative image of African-Americans. As one black adman noted, "The advertising industry did not create discrimination, but it is one of the most powerful influences for continuing it."² It was this power that activists sought to challenge and, eventually, change. Activists operated under two mutually supporting themes. First, they wanted to increase the use of blacks
in advertisements, especially in racially integrated scenes. Second, activists wanted to increase the number of blacks working in the advertising industry. Although the initial emphasis was on the first goal, activists reasoned that achieving the second would enhance and extend the first.

Still, to agency executives hiring blacks as outside consultants to company marketing programs was one thing. Hiring a black person to work within an agency was another matter entirely. As blacks pressed for inclusion in all facets of American life, corporate America was under mounting pressure to expand the roles of blacks in white-collar employment. Pressure came from the federal government with the passage of laws supporting equal employment opportunity. Various state laws also helped lead to erosion of employment discrimination.\(^3\)

Regardless of the company or industry, one central item was needed for successful integration at the white-collar level—company management had to make employment policies crystal clear both within the corporate framework and to clients. There could be no gray area when it came to integration, lest the policy not be taken seriously. Executives were cautioned not to lower their employment standards to hire blacks, but to be prepared to provide blacks with the necessary training. Said one activist, "Hiring any unqualified Negro...can be quite as bad as hiring none. More importantly, it convinces those who want to be convinced that 'Negroes aren't ready to be advanced'."\(^4\) Accordingly, civil rights activists met with high-ranking executives, rather than middle managers, and urged them to institute training programs for prospective black employees.\(^5\)
The Urban League and the First Campaigns

In 1959, the Urban League of Greater New York began a three-year study of the hiring practices of New York advertising agencies. The group found that the ten largest advertising firms in the city, which together had more than 20,000 employees, but fewer than 25 blacks were in creative or executive positions. Furthermore, three agencies employed over half of all the blacks found in these positions. Also, many blacks who held creative or executive positions were concentrated in areas related to the Negro market, something the League regarded "as a form of segregated integration." League members had two demands for agency leaders. First, they wanted an increase in the number of blacks employed by agencies. Second, for agency executives to ensure that blacks participated in all facets of agency work, including campaigns to reach white consumers.

Although members of the Urban League considered the use of blacks in areas dedicated to the black consumer market as a negative, some black admen disagreed. Black advertising experts, like David Sullivan, urged the League to modify its arguments about black admen and the black consumer market. Sullivan noted that rather than being discriminatory, advertising to black was in fact recognition of the unique attributes of black consumers. If done appropriately, advertising to black consumers would not only respond to their employment aspirations, but also their social and cultural aspiration as well. One of the ways to ensure that advertisements would not offend black consumers was to utilize blacks to create the campaign. Sullivan reasoned that blacks could use
their positions in agencies to create a campaign to a black consumer that "makes him feel that he is at last a recognized member of society." Therefore, rather than being a form of "segregated integration," blacks who worked on campaigns to the black consumer market filled an important niche in the industry.

In 1961, after the study was concluded, the League presented the findings to the American Association of Advertising Agencies (Four A's) board of governors in New York. Subsequently the Four A's commissioned an employment survey of all agencies with more than 500 employees. The Four A's study found a total of 100 blacks working in the agencies, 75 more than the 25 found in the League study. But the study also included blacks working as maids, mail clerks, and janitors. With those numbers removed, researchers had in fact found few additional blacks in creative or executive positions. Consequently, the League sent the resumes of 27 blacks with advertising experience to the Four A's with the expectation that the group would help them secure employment. Of the 27 resumes forwarded them, the Four A's considered only four men to have the requisite experience to be considered for positions in the industry. When questioned about the elimination of 23 candidates, John Crichton, president of the Four A's, stated that the group had "gone out of its way" to set up interviews for the four blacks. Furthermore, he cautioned the members of the Urban League to lower their expectations since the advertising business was a highly competitive one. He offered the opinion that "color is absolutely no barrier to talent" and advancement. Activists at the Urban League found Crichton's
explanation less than compelling and in late 1962 they began approaching advertising agencies on an individual basis to press for an increase in employment opportunities for blacks.\textsuperscript{10}

Upon approaching individual advertising agencies, League members' experiences duplicated those of blacks who sought positions in mainstream firms: a cordial reception followed by either a complete lack of action or the argument that there were no qualified blacks available. Activists found that executives were more than willing to meet with them and discuss their concerns, but not to follow-up with concrete steps to address those concerns. From December 1962 to February 1963, an Urban League employment committee met with representatives from ten of the largest advertising agencies in the nation. The agencies included: J. Walter Thompson; McCann-Erickson; Young & Rubicam; Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborn; Ted Bates & Company; Foote, Cone & Belding; Benton & Bowles; Compton Advertising; Grey Advertising; and Kenyon & Eckhardt. After meeting with representatives from all ten agencies, the only evidence of action that League executives found was the hiring of a black man as a media researcher. One League official said,

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Most advertising executives regard themselves as enlightened, thinking people who are above such primitive attitudes. For them prejudice is a psychological, emotional factor that leads to irrational acts. On the other hand, however, the same unprejudiced executives enforce a covert policy of discrimination in employment, because it is the custom in the advertising industry.\textsuperscript{11}
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Blacks found few opportunities for work in the industry because they lacked the experience, but the Jim Crow pattern of hiring discrimination kept them from getting the experience.
Advertising executives continued to claim innocence and protested that they could not find qualified black employees. Edward Stern, owner of an agency staffing firm noted, "I have yet to meet a competent copywriter or account executive who is a Negro. There just aren't any. I don't feel there would be any discrimination on the executive or creative ends. It's just a complete lack of available talent." The League committee responded to these types of arguments by noting that there was little evidence that agencies had tried to find black personnel. Moreover, some League officials admitted that the pool of available experienced blacks was limited, but they encouraged agency leaders to begin to develop a pool of black personnel. According to a report in Advertising Age, few agencies had made any efforts to recruit black college students, or to enroll African-Americans into any of the various training programs. For those who were employed by agencies, many often found that their skin color barred them from advancing beyond positions related to the Negro market. For those blacks who did not have the superior qualifications of a Roy Eaton, the black consumer market was often the beginning and end of their careers. Despite experience or a desire to work on a more diverse range of accounts, many black advertising personnel at mainstream agencies had few opportunities for promotion. Consequently many blacks worked as freelancers rather than as employees of mainstream firms. This position at least kept open the opportunity of working on a diverse body of accounts and limited the sting of rejection due to discrimination. When agency representative replied that talent, not discrimination drove employment in advertising, Richard Clarke, owner of the Hallmark
Employment Agency, which specialized in placing blacks with agencies, tersely responded, "Do I think there's discrimination in advertising? There's discrimination under every rock." 13

Because of the lethargy and disinterest League members felt they were getting from the Four A's and the individual agencies, activists decided to increase the pressure on the industry. The League turned over the findings of the study, as well as information from the meetings with the Four A's and agency executives, to various governmental organizations concerned with employment discrimination. The League's also sent the report to the New York City Commission on Human Rights, the New York State Commission Against Discrimination, and the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunities. Also, the report was sent to other civil rights groups, to black newspapers, to corporate advertisers, and to labor groups. On the move to increase the pressure on the industry, Frederick Richmond, president of the Urban League, said, "We have gotten nowhere after trying all the persuasion we could. It is now time for publicity and a little stronger action than persuasion. All the agencies we met with agreed discrimination is wrong, that Negroes should be hired. An yet they've done nothing." 14

Some in the advertising industry responded to the League's charges of discrimination by deflecting the responsibility onto agency clients or white consumers. One advertising executive said, "In many cases, if an agency has a bias, it's because the client wants it that way." 15 Other executives reasoned that agencies did not hire blacks because agency leaders were wary of offending
clients based in the South or white consumers. After all, some reasoned, look at what Pepsi-Cola had gone through when it hired Harvey Russell. Certainly the company had increased sales to black consumers, but Pepsi officials also faced a boycott from some white consumers. That the boycott was based on the perceived race of Russell's wife did not seem to matter. What did matter was that the event had drawn negative attention and criticism to the company, something that many agency executives wanted to avoid.

Still, despite a common interest in maintaining clients and increasing product sales, not all persons within the advertising industry felt the League's charges were unfounded. After the League's criticism of the agency business became public news, Charles Davis, a white advertising agency owner, wrote a letter to Advertising Age supporting the League's efforts. Davis noted that the most serious impact of excluding blacks from advertising agencies went beyond the numbers of black employed. Instead, the heaviest impact came in that the lack of blacks in agencies was accompanied by a lack of positive images of blacks in advertisements. Davis reasoned, "The hiring practices of a relatively small employer group are minor compared with the harm of systematic exclusion of over 10 percent of the population from representation or reference in most advertising purporting to depict American scenes. The public is thus educated to accept such exclusion as normal and proper, and group prejudices are enforced." Echoing the sentiment of some black activists, he concluded that
even though the people in the advertising industry had not invented
discrimination, the racial homogeneity present in their work was in many ways
responsible for maintaining it.

Davis's letter illustrates the efforts of those who encouraged the advertising
industry leaders to stop committing their sins of omission. During the 1930s, 40s,
and 50s, blacks effectively pressed the members of the advertising industry to
end their sins of commission; meaning presenting blacks in a derogatory and
stereotypical positions. One way in which the industry responded was virtually to
eliminate blacks from advertisements outside of those directed specifically to the
black community. This elimination was nearly as damaging as the stereotyping
because it implicitly denied the existence of a black population in the United
States. It was these sins of omission that civil rights groups were trying to
change. Advertising, they reasoned, should be inclusive of all of the nation's
racial groups in order to both effectively sell products and reflect the nation's
diversity. Also, in the 1960s the pressure to include blacks in advertisements
was accompanied by an effort to increase their employment numbers in the
industry.17

In previous decades, advertising agencies may have been able to deflect the
criticism long enough to avoid making any significant changes in their
employment patterns. Yet what agency executives found in the 1960s, was that
black consumers and civil rights organizations were willing to maintain the
pressure until employment changes occurred. Although the activists in the Urban
League turned their attention to other issues, other civil rights organizations and
equal employment opportunities committees filled the void. These entities, building upon the information they had received from the Urban League, continued to press advertising agencies to take concrete steps toward racial inclusion.

**The Congress of Racial Equality**

Founded in Chicago in 1942, CORE was committed to the use of non-violence and an interracial membership to achieve an integrated society. Consequently, the program that emerged from the group and targeted the advertising industry was part of a larger organizational goal of an integrated society. In 1963, led by Clarence Funnye, head of the New York branch, CORE launched the "TV Image Campaign." Funnye conceived of the Image campaign as a way to help further the goals of an integrated society. He believed that part of the resistance to racial integration was that the image of African-Americans presented them as almost a non-human group. Consequently, the goals of the Image campaign included increasing the use of racially integrated commercials, obtaining jobs for blacks in advertising and other media industries, and using commercials to change blacks' image in the nation. Activists wanted the program to result in a "better general representation" of American life in commercials. Although there were many potential ways to achieve this end (including accurate gender or economic representations) activists focused their attention on increasing the number of blacks visible in the nation's advertisements.  

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The activists who worked on the Image campaign were interested in representations of integration in all forms of advertisements, but they focused their greatest attention on television commercials. As a communications medium, television was the most widespread and intimate communications medium available. Unlike radio, newspapers, or magazines, advertisements on television had the power to both speak to consumers and to present them with a moving visual image. Therefore, television, activists reasoned, was a potentially powerful tool in their efforts. Osborn Elliot, editor of *Newsweek*, echoed activists' contentions. He told agency representatives:

> Every time you buy a spot on television... you advertise the benefits of white society. When the Negro looks at your TV commercial for a detergent, for example, he has one eye on your product, but his other eye is on the background against which that product is displayed. The dishwasher, the freezer, the manicured lawn in Westport, the crystal clear swimming pool, the power mower, and all the other paraphernalia of what is considered the good white life today. Negroes want to share this life.¹⁹

Elliot's argument complimented that of activists on the Image campaign. However, they would have added that advertising could also be used to represent elements of American life beyond the disparity in material culture, namely racial diversity. Activists agreed with black adman Leonard Evans, who noted, "You put Negroes on TV to educate the white man to the fact that the Negro is part of America."²⁰ Advertising executives not only had the power, activists reasoned, but also the responsibility to use their persuasive talents to do more than sell products, they also had to educate and inform on social issues.

Before initiating the Image campaign, CORE members conducted extensive research into the number of blacks used on television commercials as well as the
roles they played. One particularly public phase of their research had CORE members organizing black children around a series of television sets on a Harlem street. Activists had set up seven television sets, each of which was tuned to one of the seven stations in New York. Over the course of six Saturday afternoons, the children, along with others who stopped to participate, were given a silver dollar for every black face (outside of sports stars) that they could point out. After completing the experiment, the group had given away only fifteen dollars. While the television experiment was one of the less scientific aspects of CORE research, the effort clearly illustrated to members and to passers-by that there were precious few blacks on television programs or in commercials.

The design of the Image campaign called for activists to approach three of the largest advertisers in the nation—Lever Brothers, Colgate, and Proctor & Gamble—first and then gradually move to smaller advertisers. Funnye noted, "If we can get the biggest giant killers—Lever, Procter & Gamble and Colgate and perhaps a few others—to set a trend, we don't think we would be blocked for long by the small companies." The group planned to contact the leadership of each company directly and request a meeting to discuss their concerns. Activists focused on advertisers because they believed that because advertisers controlled the dollars that went to both advertising agencies and television networks, advertisers had the power to influence many aspects of the media images. The group chose to go directly to the top of each company so as to make sure that those who had the power to make immediate changes in company policies were aware of the group and their concerns. The group had a
number of organization allies in this effort, including the Protestant Council of New York, the United Federation of Teachers, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the New York chapter of the NAACP, and the Urban League. But the hammer in the hands of CORE activists was a series of selective purchasing committees set up throughout the nation. Upon meetings with advertisers, CORE members were sure to highlight the existence of these groups as a means to let advertisers know the impact of their refusal to negotiate. The potential impact committees was enhanced by the success of the Philadelphia Selective Patronage Campaign, as well as the research completed by the Center for Research in Marketing that indicated the potential level of black participation in economic boycotts. The first company that CORE members met with was Lever Brothers, a firm with a long history of marketing to black consumers.23

When CORE activists approached Lever Brothers they found that company executives were more than willing to listen to their demands. What had taken place was that both the Urban League and the New York Commission on Human Rights had already approached company leaders about their advertising program. Therefore, by the time that CORE reached the company, executives were already altering corporate policies regarding the use of blacks in commercials. Company executives, in advance of CORE requests, asked their advertising agencies to submit plans for more inclusive usage of blacks and other minorities in its commercials. Company leaders also made their new polices known to agencies so as to forestall any future problems. This was the area in which executives had the greatest power to affect change—their commercials.
Lever Brothers shared the sponsorship of various programs with other companies. Therefore company leaders did not have much direct power over network program content. On commercials, however, executives had the final decision-making power, and could force advertising agencies to follow their policies or risk the loss of the account. As a result, Lever executives demanded that their five advertising agencies not only develop plans on how to use blacks in commercials, but also to report on their employment of minorities as well as that of the firms used in any other facets of its advertising. Lever Brothers' agencies included some of the largest agencies in the industry, and the impact of such a directive from a firm the size of Lever Brothers reverberated throughout the industry. The announcement signaled that, unlike previous years, black demands for greater representation and inclusion would not be ignored or overlooked. A few months after the first racially integrated commercials were broadcast, Lever executives reported that they had experienced no adverse consumer reactions. This was important because many company executives and members of the trade press were carefully monitoring the effort and the reception of the ads could dictate the future of integration in advertisements.  

After meeting with Lever executives, organizers of the Image campaign moved on to its other targets. In August, 1963, members of Funnye's committee sent a letter to Colgate chairman George Lesch. The letter argued that there was significant discrimination in advertising and that the Colgate company was "one of the most flagrant offenders." To rectify this problem, the committee asked Colgate to begin to use blacks in their television commercials; to use
blacks on the television programs that they sponsored; and to utilize black models in print and radio advertising to the general market. Furthermore, activists asked the company to make a “good faith” effort to achieve these steps within 30 days. Lest Colgate officials fail to take their concerns seriously, CORE members pointed out the presence of their selective purchasing committees.²⁵

CORE activists walked a fine line between presenting the selective patronage committees as an encouragement to company leaders to change their policies versus a threat to intimidate those who balked at the demands. Activists knew that the way to gain concessions was not through antagonizing company executives but in altering their point of view. Moreover, the Funnye committee wanted the integrated ads to be the beginning of a trend, rather than an initiative that burned brightly in response to intense pressure and then died. The goal of the program was that television, in both commercials and, eventually, programming, reflect an accurate picture of the nation’s racial diversity. Funnye argued, “What we want is for television to show things the way they are—all the way, in the shows and in commercials. We think it’s unrealistic the way advertising is now. Now wouldn’t it be nice if now and then on television a little Negro girl came running in shouting, ‘Look, Ma, no cavities.’ That’s what we want; just ordinary things. We’re not asking for anything revolutionary.”²⁶ Therefore, activists did not feel the need to threaten companies as much as they needed executives to listen and understand the benefits of integrated advertising.²⁷
After being approached by CORE activists, Colgate officials responded in a manner similar to that of Lever Brothers. Executives argued that they had been conducting an internal study of integrated advertising prior to the CORE letter. Furthermore, they were requesting that their ad agencies begin to utilize more blacks in their commercials. This move toward integrated advertisements was applauded by many in the trade press. An editorialist with Advertising Age agreed with Funnye that it was time for advertising to be more reflective of real-life in America. He reasoned, "The move should be applauded and followed by other advertisers, many of whom have been dragging their heels." Furthermore, if this new positive trend were to expand, "American advertising may, after all these years, begin to mirror American life reasonably faithfully, instead of presenting an idealized picture of American life as a handful of cloistered romanticists would like it to be."

Executives of the last single CORE target, Procter & Gamble, also agreed to the request to integrate their advertisements. In the span of a less than eight months, the activists had succeeded in their initial goal. The three "giant killers" agreed to integrate their advertising. CORE leaders used the momentum from the first three companies to persuade other network advertisers to meet with them and discuss their advertising policies. But instead of approaching companies on an individual basis as they had done with the Lever Brothers, Colgate, and Procter & Gamble, activists invited groups of advertisers to a meeting to discuss their requests. During this phase of the Image campaign, CORE personnel illustrated how each of the companies present had used blacks
in the past and how they would like to see them used in the future. To present a not so veiled threat of the ramifications of non-compliance with group requests, representatives from the selective patronage committees attended many of these meetings. Also, should advertisers fail to take even these committees seriously, the Center for Research in Marketing released an updated survey showing that nearly 90 percent of blacks would participate in a consumer boycott and that nearly 10 percent would never utilize the boycotted product again. The Center report cautioned, "Business executives who, through apathy, fear or design, fail to concern themselves with this problem are in for a rude awakening in the near future." Statistics in the report encouraged executives to at least listen to what CORE activists had to say.

By the end of the first phase of the Image campaign, CORE activists had met with representatives from 36 major advertisers. Companies such as Coca-Cola, Kellogg's Gillette, and Phillip Morris sent representatives to meet with the group and concluded agreements. The agreements called for company executives to integrate their advertisements to the general market. An agreement between CORE and an advertiser was not a written contract. Instead it was more of a coming to an understanding of positions. During a meeting between CORE activists and company representatives most agreed to secure integrated ads within CORE's time frame of 90 days. During the 90-day period, advertisers were requested to submit progress reports every 30 days. Activists contacted any advertiser whose report was more than three days overdue to request an immediate update.
CORE leaders considered the agreement fulfilled when a company official could produce either storyboards or completed commercials featuring black characters.\textsuperscript{33}

The success of the public pressure brought by CORE, and the Urban League, was illustrated by an announcement in September 1963 that over 40 major advertisers were preparing integrated advertisements. The program had proven so successful that Funnye optimistically observed that “integrated advertising” on television and in print could become “commonplace by the end of 1964.”\textsuperscript{34} While Funnye may have been overly optimistic, by the end of 1963 there had been a significant increase in the number of black faces in advertisements. In a commercial for All detergent, television personality Art Linkletter questioned a black woman about stains on her family’s clothes. Both Trans World and American Airlines ran print advertisements featuring black models. Also, among regional companies, utilities in Boston and New York City utilized black models in their ads.\textsuperscript{35}

During the second phase of the Image campaign, conducted in 1964, CORE met with representatives from the final 64 companies from the 100 largest advertisers in the nation. It was during this phase that advertisers learned that CORE activists did not play favorites in this campaign. During a brief “misunderstanding” between CORE and the Pepsi-Cola company, activists began preparing plans for a selective patronage campaign against the cola giant.\textsuperscript{36}
What precipitated the conflict with Pepsi-Cola was that Pepsi company officials had met with CORE representatives but failed to submit a report on the progress of their integrated advertisements. In response, Funnye sent a letter to company president Donald Kendall setting a deadline for receipt of the report. Pepsi, although it had a highly placed black executive in Harvey Russell, had long been active in the black consumer market, had produced audio records on black history, and had funded scholarships for black students, did not utilize black models in ads to mainstream consumers. The company often utilized black models, but they were reserved for advertisements in black-oriented magazines and newspapers. Funnye concluded his letter with the admonition that, if there were no response within two weeks, the company would be the target of a selective purchasing campaign. The “misunderstanding” was rectified within a week by a telephone call from Russell conveying Pepsi’s agreement to use blacks in ads to the mainstream market. Although the potential conflict was resolved without a selective patronage effort it let other companies know the seriousness with which CORE activists took this campaign. It also clearly illustrated CORE’s desires for advertising policies.

In terms of achieving the original goals, the Image campaign was relatively successful. The campaign had resulted in a tangible increase in the number of blacks used in advertisements and helped initiate a debate in the trade press on the issue of black employment in agencies. Thus even among those advertisers and agencies not touched directly by the program, executives knew of the goals and results of the campaign.
After success with the advertisers, Funnye planned to move on to target the advertising agencies as well. He wanted to first gain compliance from the advertisers and then use that power and publicity to force change among advertising agencies. In 1964, the Image committee began conducting preliminary research into the level of discrimination blacks faced in the advertising industry. Unfortunately, as the civil rights movement took a more militant turn in the mid-1960s, Funnye found his own power within CORE eroded. The organization branched away from integration and interracialism and the Image campaign, considered a holdover from the period when integration and interracialism were part of the organizational focus, was eliminated. Also, any chance to renew the Image campaign disappeared in 1970 when Funnye was killed in a plane crash. Still, after the Image campaign faded from view, the national CORE organization became involved in a direct action campaign against the advertising agency business.38

**CORE and Consumer Information Services**

In 1966 the national CORE organization and the media information division of Consumer Information Services (CIS) engaged in a joint protest. The CIS was an urban-based organization designed to improve the relationship between corporate American and urban consumers. CORE and the CIS joined forces to protest the "high cost of Jim Crow advertising and the segregated media."39 The campaign was directed against the Benton & Bowles advertising agency. The Benton & Bowles agency was chosen because it was the agency for Procter & Gamble, the leading national advertiser. Protestors were angered by the fact
that Procter & Gamble made a large number of sales to black consumers but did not return any funds to the black community. Although the company had agreed years earlier to utilize integrated ads, this campaign was aimed at actual dollars being returned to the black community.\textsuperscript{40}

Flo Kennedy, head of the media information division of CIS, argued that a portion of the $250 million Procter & Gamble spent on advertising each year should be returned to the black community. Kennedy reasoned that the returns could come in a multitude of forms including: hiring policies designed to increase the number of Procter & Gamble's black workers or lower prices for those living in the "ghetto." The true goal of the group, however, was the creation of training programs for blacks interested in working in the advertising industry. Targeting Benton & Bowles not only got the attention of Procter & Gamble but more importantly that of agency executives. Once activists had the attention of the agency they moved to open up opportunities for blacks in the advertising industry. Therefore picketers lined up outside Benton & Bowles armed with placards reading, "Have you got a bigot in your shopping bag," and "Black buyers can't afford Madison Avenue parasites."\textsuperscript{41}

The campaign waged against B&B illustrates the ideological change that occurred in CORE during the mid-1960. Whereas the Image campaign had been directed at increasing the use of integrated advertisements to help "educate" whites about blacks, the CORE/CIS campaign was aimed solely at improving the lives of blacks. Activists pressed for lower prices for urban residents, or training programs as a way to help the black underclass. Also, they considered the
Image campaign something that had sought to aid only the black upper and middle class, whereas a campaign to aid the black underclass was an effort worthy of the newly directed organization.42

The pickets arrayed outside Benton & Bowles were successful in gaining the attention of company executives. Agency executives agreed to meet with Kennedy and other group representatives as a sign of their willingness to hear their demands. They told the protesters that they were willing to listen to their demands if they were brought a specific proposal outlining their demands and proposed solutions. A few days after this initial contact, Kennedy sent a proposal to B&B suggesting that it establish a Media Workshop Institute in Harlem. The plan called for B&B to provide $5 million the first year to help set up and staff the Institute. Once established, the Institute would provide training for blacks and other minorities interested in entering the advertising industry. The plan also called for advertising executives from B&B and other interested agencies to act as instructors for the various classes. The workshops would be arranged over a six-week period, after which the trainees would be placed into jobs in the advertising industry.43

While it is unclear exactly how the plan for a Media Institute was arrived at, it complimented CORE's strategy in the mid-1960s. Historians August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, have observed that in the mid-1960s part of CORE's focus was on community organization and "organizing the ghetto." A training program for urban residents fit nicely into this organizational focus. If successful, it was a means to provide urban residents with a way out of their economic deprivation. It
was also a program that was organized by African-Americans, for African-Americans, which was also part of CORE's focus on removing whites from the organizational power structure. An emphasis on racial integration became a tactic from CORE's past when whites were more intimately involved in the organization. The new organizational leadership emphasized black militancy and nationalism to the exclusion of significant white involvement. While this nationalism did not extend to complete racial separatism, advocates of the philosophy emphasized blacks helping blacks without the direct aid of whites.\textsuperscript{44}

The militancy expressed by the CORE/CIS tandem did not go unnoticed by those in the advertising community and the trade press. While some argued that the actions of the picketers "makes little sense," others went further, calling the pickets "a mild form of extortion."\textsuperscript{45} Even more extreme, an editorial writer in \textit{Printer's Ink} contended that the "advertising business must conclude it is being victimized by bigotry."\textsuperscript{46} While many writers agreed with the general idea of bringing more blacks into the advertising business, they preferred that it be done on a voluntary basis. One writer concluded, "More Negroes should be brought into agency work, and more should be employed as models and actors in advertising. Many agencies are bending over backwards to do just that. But bending over is different from being sledge-hammered over."\textsuperscript{47} Kennedy countered, "The role of Madison Ave. is to program the oppressed so that they will consent to their oppression."\textsuperscript{48} Hence getting more blacks into advertising agencies was one potential tool to alter the situation in and give greater power to the members of the oppressed group.
Yet while some in the trade press viewed the pickets as evidence of reverse discrimination, Benton & Bowles executives sought to compromise with the protestors. Executives balked at footing the requested $5 million for the institute, but they agreed to work in concert with CIS to set up a training program. Executives also agreed to immediately interview anyone with the necessary qualifications for agency work that CIS recommended. Executives concluded, "It is our earnest hope that out of these activities will emerge recognizable progress for the people you represent. You may be sure that we shall for our part see that this comes about." With the agreement for a training program reached, the demonstrations around Benton & Bowles ceased.

After the picketing had concluded, Kennedy publicly admitted that there were additional reasons, beyond the presence of Procter & Gamble as a client, for the targeting of B&B. She considered Benton & Bowles to be "a liberal modern agency with a neat complement of Negroes on its payrolls." Therefore, "if we got nowhere with them, we had no reason to believe other agencies would treat us any better." The emphasis on getting Procter & Gamble to return money to black residents was a feint used to focus attention on the real goal—increasing the number of black professionals at Benton & Bowles. Kennedy and the CIS followed the same path to success that Funnye's Image committee had: they targeted a single representative company with the hopes that others would follow its lead.

The difference between the Image campaign and the CIS program, however, was that Funnye's committee experienced success with a number of companies,
and the CIS effort did not. The program was credited with resulting in the hiring of two blacks as clerks in the agency. But executives also noted that the program led to “intensive soul-searching” and a re-commitment to an open hiring and promotion policy. Rather than to continue to focus solely on the agency business, group leaders diffused their efforts into other areas of community organization. Hence B&B was the only agency to agree to work with CIS activists. But Kennedy and the CIS periodically reappeared to challenge what they viewed as the racist practices of the advertising industry (see Chapter 5).

But the Urban League, CORE, and the CIS initiative were not the only civil rights organizations to target the racial policies of the advertising agency business. In fact, these organizational efforts only complimented a larger, and in some ways more successful effort by the NAACP.

**The NAACP and Advertising Agencies**

The NAACP's campaign against the advertising industry came as part of a larger effort to increase the number of African-Americans used in the media. Organizers of the effort called for increasing the number of blacks on television, on radio, and in motion pictures. One major target was advertisers, because they were, especially on television, program sponsors and could be used to pressure the networks into using blacks. From the outset, the main weapon (beyond moral suasion) in the NAACP's arsenal was the threat of boycotts or selective purchasing campaigns. But advertisers were only the initial target of NAACP members.
NAACP activists reasoned that advertisers and agencies were each at least partly responsible for the state of black media images and they planned to approach each group accordingly.\textsuperscript{54}

The NAACP plan was to approach advertisers and advertising agency executives and get them to agree to include blacks in all of their sponsored television shows and the accompanying commercials. The organization established a list of eight major demands for the television and motion picture industries. Of these demands, the one relating to advertising was the third: “Negroes must [emphasis mine] be used on television commercials.”\textsuperscript{55} The NAACP’s initiative against the advertising industry developed from this single demand.

In August 1963, the organization held a meeting in Los Angeles with 125 representatives from various radio and television stations and advertising agencies. NAACP leaders told the gathered body that the members of the media industries had been “flagrantly and openly discriminatory to blacks,” and that there had been “pitifully few indications of even token hiring.”\textsuperscript{56} Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the NAACP, told the representatives that he expected blacks to be given the same opportunities as those of other persons. Speaking directly to the representatives from ad agencies, Wilkins expanded upon the original list of eight demands the NAACP had made a month earlier. Wilkins argued that advertising agencies should set up training programs for blacks and increase efforts to recruit blacks. He recommended that blacks not be hired as “tokens” or to relieve the pressure brought by the organization. Instead, he
recommended that agency personnel carefully select qualified trainable
individuals. He concluded by noting that the advertising agencies had a
responsibility to present a more realistic depiction of the United States.\textsuperscript{57}

One month after the meeting in Los Angeles, NAACP officials met with
officers from the Four A's and representatives from leading advertising agencies.
The purpose of this meeting was to discuss specifically the employment of
African-Americans by agencies, and the images of blacks propagated in
advertisements. Also, during this meeting Four A's leaders agreed to assemble
representatives from ad agencies to hear and discuss the NAACP concerns.
Accordingly, a few weeks later Four A's executives called a meeting of 102
representatives for 56 of the largest advertising agencies in the nation. Herbert
Hill, national labor secretary of the NAACP, charged the representatives with
having a conception of blacks that lagged behind that of the rest of society.
Furthermore, echoing the first point of the program, he asked that the
representatives return to their firms and begin to present blacks in a realistic
manner. He said, "We don't ask you to become a special pleader...Negroes
function in all fields today and are part of the day-to-day definition of the
American scene. He is no longer the 'invisible man'.\textsuperscript{58} James Tolbert, president
of the Beverly Hills chapter of the NAACP, told the representatives that it was
their actions (or lack thereof), that had brought about the NAACP demands. It
was the "unawareness, habit, apathy and a few instances of out and out racial
prejudice" within the advertising community that had led the organization to this
point.\textsuperscript{59} Another black activist argued, "No segment in America has done so
much to make Negro Americans the invisible men as the advertising industry."\(^6\)

Activists from the NAACP presented the representatives with a five-point program that requested better treatment of blacks in advertising agencies and in advertisements. The five points included:

1. Recognition of 'the simple truth' that 20,000,000 American citizens are Negro consumers, and therefore ads in basic media must reflect the fact that Negroes are represented in every walk of life.
2. Sponsorship of TV and radio programs and commercials that eliminate all racial barriers and permit the unrestricted use of Negro performers.
3. Ad agency employment based upon merit, with Negroes participating in on-the-job training and/or apprenticeship programs.
4. Use of Negro models in national and local campaigns for general media, not only for Negro appeal media.
5. Formation of a Four A's committee to help implement this program and resolve present and future problems.\(^1\)

It is clear that these five points were designed to force advertising agencies to become part of the "fundamental alteration" of the African-American image that activists desired. The first two points would begin the basic rehabilitation of blacks' image and see that black performers would benefit. The members of the NAACP structured the third point to ensure that blacks would be part of remaking their own image. Activists recognized that many blacks lacked the direct experience of working in an advertising agency. That did not mean, however, that there were not thousands of people available who could be trained with the requisite skills. Point number four ensured that blacks would be present in all of the nation's media, thereby insuring that the rehabilitated images would be viewed throughout the nation. The final point located responsibility for monitoring
compliance squarely at the feet of the Four A's, rather than with the NAACP. Therefore, should the program falter, activists had a central group of people to deal with rather than the leaders of individual advertising agencies.\textsuperscript{62}

At the conclusion of the meeting, Four A's president Crichton issued a statement indicating that a number of advertising agencies had agreed to an anti-discrimination policy. Moreover, because of the level of interest, agencies were now finding it difficult to find qualified blacks to hire. Although some agency executives, like those at J. Walter Thompson, did actively recruit black college students, they were in the minority. Most agencies continued to cling to the traditional argument that they could not find qualified black employees. But, simple statements of action no longer were enough to placate the demands of black activists. Especially if those statements of action were accompanied by the protest that there were no qualified blacks available to hire. As CORE members had done in their dealings with major advertisers, NAACP activists were looking for evidence of concrete action. Should that action be lacking, however, the group was prepared to take further steps.\textsuperscript{63}

In November 1963, representatives from the NAACP and the Four A's met once again. One reporter hailed the meeting as evidence that "the color line has been irrevocably splintered in national advertising."\textsuperscript{64} While the writer may have been a bit too optimistic in his or her assessment, the meeting was nonetheless an historic event. The occasion was a session held at the Eastern meeting of the Four A's. Because much of the advertising industry was based in the eastern United States, the meeting of the organization was considered the "largest and
most important assembly of regional advertising groups in the U.S.®® The
daylong session, "The Expanding Negro Market and Its Importance – Methods to
Reach It," was the first instance that a major panel discussion was on the agenda
regarding blacks in advertising. Roy Wilkins, was the keynote speaker for the
session. Wilkins, echoing the point of members of an earlier panel, told
advertiser and agency representatives that they should help blacks by using
depictions with a "new realistic image." He also cautioned that blacks were,
without the guidance of a national organization or structured boycott, choosing to
spend their money with firms that projected a positive image of blacks rather than
with those that did not. Therefore, there was the potential of profit gains for those
companies whose advertisements exhibited what blacks considered to be a
respectful image of them.®®

Just as advertisers sought black consumers because it was good business,
executives heard that seeking black employees could also be good business for
advertising agencies. Black employees could bring a degree of insight and
creativity not currently in existence in the industry. Another speaker, a white
executive with C.J LaRoche Advertising, argued that agencies should actively
seek black employees because they represented a potential source of future
advertising creativity. Since one of the major issues facing the industry was a
lack of young, creative talent, blacks could potentially help fill the gap. He noted,
"I often think what a matchless copywriter James Baldwin would have made...
Baldwin is almost the sum total of the good copywriters I have observed. He would have been hell to get along with, but my, oh my, what campaigns he would have turned out.™

A few days after the meeting, the Four A's placed a full-page advertisement in the New York Times with the heading: "An Invitation to All Bright Young Men and Women to Consider Advertising as A Career." Publishers of the Times offered the advertising space free of charge as a gesture of concern for the racial crisis. The ad featured a drawing depicting a group of young people including a black man and woman. Readers were assured that the only requirements of an advertising career were "intelligence... enthusiasm... common sense... and persuasiveness."™ Furthermore, the ad indicated that for those who were interested, experience was not as important as potential, and that a college education was not a requirement. The ad concluded by urging all interested readers to write to the Four A's for more information. Also, the ad was reprinted in approximately 40 other newspapers around the nation.™

It is not clear whether this advertisement was a direct response to the session held had the Eastern meeting of the Four A's. Still, this was the first instance of a major advertising organization reaching into the public space with a depiction of a racially diverse advertising industry. Whether or not the advertisement emerged directly from the meeting, the pressure brought by the NAACP was at least partly responsible for the organization exhibiting an appreciation of racial diversity as depicted in the ad.
Among major advertising agencies, the idea of using blacks and whites together in integrated scenes for the general marketplace had a mixed reception. Most deferred to the policies of the client rather than having any sort of internal directive. With the presence of the CORE Image campaign, many agencies were being told to begin producing integrated ads. One Benton & Bowles executive likely spoke for many in the industry when he said, "We're all a little sensitive in this business. We don't want to irritate people. We're in the business of selling goods." At least one agency, however, J. Walter Thompson, had a policy of actively looking for ways to use blacks in their advertisements. The original source of this policy is unclear, but the only parameters were that the scenes serve the needs of the client and that they be natural, rather than forced.

Regardless of the agency standards on using blacks and whites together, virtually all agencies held to the standard of avoiding social scenes. Scenes within a public space, such as a baseball stadium or an airport, were acceptable; social scenes especially in the case of non-celebrity blacks, were not. This standard was supported by some blacks, such as John Johnson, who argued, "What we are fighting for is not necessarily integrated advertising; we are fighting for believability. To be believable, you should not contrive an ad, you should not show as integrated something that is not. If it is normally integrated, then show it; if it is not integrated, then don't show it as such. Tell the truth." As the decade wore on, however, Johnson's arguments would become those of the minority. Black activists began to challenge advertising agencies not to only use blacks in scenes depicting how things were, but also how they could become.
Activists with the NAACP were among those who viewed advertising as another tool to speed African-Americans' elevation to first-class citizenship. Carol Taylor, president of Negro Women on the March, felt that many of the new images coming from advertisers had not gone past the tokenism of earlier decades. She argued, "As far as I'm concerned, big business will have to take the stand that they should help lead the country, even in TV commercials. Sure they may find themselves portraying social scenes with Negroes in commercials that are not quite normal, but they should take a chance and do so." Harvey Russell, one of the few blacks at the executive level with a mainstream firm, viewed advertising as having the potential to lift blacks out of "cultural isolation." Advertising, if used appropriately, could present to blacks an image of the United States that not only included them, but also welcomed them to become a part of the national life. Advertising, Russell and NAACP activists argued, could be used to improve both the white majority's image of blacks, and also blacks' image of themselves. As a writer for Sales Management explained, "For a Negro to see a Negro on television or in an ad is for him to see a visible man. And that has never happened before." The difference, as this writer noted, was that blacks would be present in the ads in a non-derogatory or stereotypical form with the result being an improved self-image. A study sponsored by the ACLU made a similar point, noting that advertisements "should go further and portray the Negro not only as he is, but as he should be as an equal member of a culturally and racially Mixed society in which Negroes and Caucasians work together, play together, go to school together and live as neighbors."
Despite the goals of activists to make advertising more socially conscious, advertisers continued to cling to their traditional role. For example, executives at Lever Brothers, who considered the use of integrated advertising "good business," only sought to use blacks where it was "natural, but not controversial." Hal Webber, vice-president of consumer relations at Lever, noted of the firm's advertising, "We are not trying to create change, we're trying to reflect it." Thus the integrated ads emerging from Lever and other companies were careful not to portray a sense of social integration among blacks and whites. An advertisement might portray a black woman discussing her family's laundry as a member of a studio audience, but that same conversation would not be held with a white person over the back fence of a housing division. Integration in advertisements was one thing, but social integration was a powder keg that no advertiser or agency wanted to touch.

The civil rights groups that pressured the advertising industry gained impressive results within a short period of time. The use of blacks in advertisements increased and a number of agency executives expressed an interest in increasing their numbers of black employees. Civil rights activists were complimented in their efforts (and agency executives pressured further) by government organizations involved in equal employment opportunity programs.

_The New York City Commission on Human Rights_

The New York City Commission on Human Rights first appeared in 1962. The group emerged out of previous commissions that addressed issues of racial relations between blacks and whites in New York City. In 1962 the commission
took on the name of the NYCHR (also known for a time as the Wagner Committee) to express commissioners interest in achieving "equal privileges and responsibility for all in housing, schools, and employment." In the early 1960s, commission members began to focus on the advertising industry and agency employment patterns. Members of the committee reasoned that the exclusion of blacks from advertisements effectively distorted the image of the United States to the detriment of all racial and ethnic groups. Increasing the number of blacks in the advertising industry, commissioners reasoned, was one way in which to increase the use of blacks in advertisements.

In mid-1963, the committee released the results of a five-month study examining the employment of blacks in television programs. The author of the report concluded (as Nat King Cole had done in the 1950s) that the major stumbling block to increasing the number of blacks on television came from advertising agencies. Some networks, such as CBS, had issued policy statements on the need to increase the number of blacks in their programming. Michael Dann, vice-president of programming at CBS, told network staffers there are "many Negro doctors, lawyers, school teachers, engineers, policemen, nurses, and jurymen in life today," and CBS should "maintain realism about having them appear as such as in our dramatic programs." After reviewing this policy statement and extensive interviews with television producers and network executives, the committee concluded the networks were not at fault. Advertisers, the committee assumed, followed the recommendation. Therefore, while networks and advertisers may have been open to greater number of blacks on
television, agencies were not, for fear of losing customers for the product and, ultimately, the client. The study concluded that although television producers were willing to use blacks on a regular basis, "advertising agencies, representing the sponsors, are neither ready nor willing" to make such recommendations. The committee also noted that in the rare instances in which blacks were used in ads, it was often in the institutional role of an employee of the advertiser (most often used to tout the company's integrated employment) rather than as a spokesperson for the product.\(^1\)

The committee did not accept at face value the network explanations for the dearth of minorities on television. It was easy, they reasoned, for television networks to pass the responsibility for minority exclusion onto advertising agencies, just as it was easy for agency representatives to pass the responsibility back to the networks. But commissioners focused their attention on the advertising agencies because a large number of agencies were based in New York City. Therefore, the committee's choice of focus on the agencies can be read as a choice based on proximity. The television and motion picture industries were heavily based in California, and, as such, beyond the effective reach of the committee. The agencies, however, were close to the headquarters of the committee, and they could be legally pressed under the fair employment practice laws of the state of New York.\(^2\)

In 1964 the committee released a report that hailed the ongoing developments in integrated advertising as a "major breakthrough." The committee found that 73 of the 500 companies that they contacted had definite
plans to utilize integrated advertisements. Accordingly, the committee
established a talent center to help place qualified minorities in positions in the
media industries. Members of the group wanted to ensure that companies would
not be able to fall back on the excuse that there were no qualified minorities
available.83

A few days after the publication of the report on integrated advertisements,
Richard Scheidker, senior vice-president of the Four A's, appeared before the
committee. The purpose for his appearance was to summarize the progress
persons in the industry had made on minority employment. Scheidker stated that
the Four A's board of directors had adopted a statement on minority employment
that was circulated to member agencies, as well as high school and college
guidance counselors. The statement pointed out that Four A's leaders believed
that it was "vital to seek out, recognize and employ the best talents available
wherever they may be found, regardless of race, color, religion or national
origin."84 Also, 85 advertising agencies had sent written commitments to the
Four A's stating their support for "the principle of job equality." Furthermore,
agencies based in New York City had agreed to a joint policy statement on anti-
discrimination that had initially been issued by the American Federation of
Television and Radio Artists. In the statement the agencies agreed to "take
affirmative steps toward the end that minority-group performers are cast in all
types of roles so that the American scene may be portrayed realistically."85

Scheidker also noted that the Four A's was encouraging agencies to be more
proactive in seeking out African-American employees. Organization leaders
instructed agency executives to consider black college students as future employees. In addition, Four A’s leaders encouraged executives to recruit blacks currently active in other business pursuits. Agencies were also directed to involve local branches of the NAACP in recruitment efforts. Sheidker was careful, however, to warn members of the committee not to expect a deluge of black employees. The advertising industry business was a small and highly competitive one, he reasoned, and executives recruited few employees from the nation’s colleges. Instead of college graduates, agencies were most likely to hire someone with experience who was already in the industry. He argued that those who were successful in the industry had entered on the ground level of employment, gained the requisite experience, and moved up the ranks.86

Despite the challenges, industry leaders, Scheidker contended, were taking concrete steps to address the issue of minority employment and advertising representation. He noted that there were training and recruitment programs that had begun to increase substantially the number of blacks in advertising agencies. Scheidker did not, however, offer a quantitative breakdown of exactly what areas in the agencies were receiving increased numbers of blacks. Given the commission members’ interest in professional employment for blacks, though, it is unlikely that these were janitorial or mail room positions. He concluded, “None would claim that all of the problems have been entirely met and solved. But we believe that this summary is enough to show that helpful forces have been set in motion by advertising agencies, not only with respect with their own employment of Negroes, but also with the employment of Negroes in advertisements and
programs on behalf of their clients." Stanley Lowell, chairman of the committee, offered careful praise to Schiedker and other representatives of the industry. Lowell stated that he was "very, very heartened" that agencies were moving voluntarily to increase minority employment. But he also noted that the commission would continue to monitor and study the industry to ensure that its actions matched its rhetoric.®®

True to Lowell's words, the commission continued to monitor agency employment practices. In 1967, the commission moved to secure detailed employment numbers from New York advertising agencies. The commission sent out a questionnaire to the 50 largest agencies regarding the number of blacks and Puerto Ricans employed and information on how minorities had been used in their ads. Agencies were also asked to provide a description of the areas in which minority employees worked.®®

Some agencies readily complied with the committee's request. James Heekin, president of Ogilvy & Mather, said, "We've cooperated with the commission and have encountered no difficulty compiling the data they requested."®® Others responded that they did not wish to provide specific numbers on minority employees other than to say that they had increased. Maxwell Dane, vice-president of Doyle, Dane Bernbach, testily offered, "You don't need to look into the files to know; we know we have much greater Negro representation."®® Although some agencies sought to put a stop to the inquiry into their internal practices, they would find that such actions only enhanced, rather than deflected, critical interest and appraisal.
Collectively, the efforts of the Urban League, CORE, NAACP, and the Wagner committee each enhanced the other. On one side was CORE, working with advertisers to convince them to utilize more inclusive advertising policies. On the other side was the NAACP, working with advertising agencies to foster employment and image changes. Both of these organizational campaigns benefited from the earlier work of the Urban League that had been concerned with issues related to both advertisers and agencies. The initiatives of the three civil rights groups benefited from the legal pressure and authority of the Wagner committee. These campaigns addressed two major areas that had been utilized to rationalize the state of affairs in advertising—adhering to the racial preferences of clients, and the lack of qualified blacks to be employees. Major advertisers had agreed to make their racial polices more explicit and inclusive, and agencies had agreed to initiate training programs to increase the number of black employees.

David Sullivan's Critical Reality

By 1964 there had been definite steps taken by some advertisers and agency executives toward changing the advertising image of blacks and increasing the number of blacks in the industry. Should agency leaders or civil rights experts become too celebratory as to these advancements, however, critical reality was not long in coming. In early 1964, black advertising veteran David Sullivan wrote a letter to Four A's president John Crichton. This letter was also copied to Whitney Young, head of the National Urban League, and Roy Wilkins. An excerpt from this letter was also printed in Advertising Age. In this letter Sullivan
chronicled his own experiences in the industry and demonstrated that, although the advertising agency business had made some strides toward racial inclusion, it still had a very long way to go.\textsuperscript{92}

Sullivan's letter demonstrated that there was a high-level of hypocrisy evident in an industry that on one hand complained about the lack of employable personnel, but on the other largely refused to hire an experienced African-American. Sullivan had carefully followed the developments of 1963, especially as they related to increasing the number of blacks in advertising agencies. He had run his own agency from 1943 to 1949, at which time he had serviced accounts for local and national clients, including some "blue-chip" accounts. At one point, before being largely usurped by John Johnson, Sullivan was the recognized expert on black consumers. Sullivan's had been one of the first black-owned firms, and likely the very first to have an affiliation with the Four A's. When he closed his agency in 1949, however, he had been unable to parlay his experience into a job with a mainstream agency. Sullivan spent fifteen years and distributed over 1200 resumes seeking employment and had yet secured only one "nearly firm" offer. His lone offer then vanished as the company hired a black consultant rather than bring Sullivan into the agency. Although many in the advertising industry had told him that he was a "better than average copywriter," no one was willing to give him a job. Instead of securing steady employment, he, like many other blacks who desired to work in advertising, had been forced to do consulting and free lance work. Moreover, though several people in the industry, both to him personally and in the trade press, decried the lack of qualified agency

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employees he had been unable to find work. One executive with a major advertising firm had told him that although he was "quite sure you can contribute to any agency in the country," there were no jobs at his firm.93

Also, for those blacks who were able to find employment in mainstream firms, their experiences were nearly always more difficult than those of fellow white employees. Blacks had fewer opportunities for job mobility, and they often had to accept lower pay than their white colleagues. In the advertising industry, job mobility for creatives, the positions held by most blacks, depended on having experience at working on a number of different types of accounts. But unless a person was at a major agency, working on different accounts came as a result of working for different agencies. Because blacks were not always welcomed at different agencies one of the primary areas to increased salary, responsibility, and professional advancement, was often closed to blacks. Even those blacks who had won awards for their work found their opportunities and salaries limited. Sullivan wrote of one such figure who said, "My work salary range has been around $20,000, sometimes a bit lower, but I've seen my white colleagues go up to $30,000 with far less to offer."94 Sullivan reasoned that neither this person, nor his own experiences were unique. Instead, the condition of limited advancement opportunities was one that could be applied to "nearly a dozen" other blacks in New York City alone.95

Sullivan wrote to Crichton, Young, and Wilkins, to prod them to further action on the issue of minority employment. He was concerned that agencies would use the mere existence of training programs as an excuse not to do more to
increase minority employment. "To wave blithely at the trainee recruiting program as an action in being, at this time and tide of events is a travesty of the first order," he argued.\textsuperscript{96} Sullivan encouraged agencies not only to maintain training programs, but also to recruit black college graduates or those with business experience. While some agencies had such programs in place, their efforts needed to be increased and put into use throughout the industry. He also noted that he expected the public pressure on advertising agencies to become more racially diverse to increase rather than decrease. "In the circumstances," he wrote. "it is small wonder not that the 'pressures outside' have been put on the industry of advertising and marketing, but, rather that it was so late in coming on the one hand, while being as gentle as it is on the other hand."\textsuperscript{97}

Sullivan emphasized that the heads of agencies would have to be actively encouraged, if not ultimately forced, to increase minority employment. For it was the leadership of agencies that had the power to compel personnel directors—the front line of actual employment decisions—to increase the number of minority employees. Until that time, however, the advertising industry would, and should, continue to receive public criticism.\textsuperscript{98}

The arguments in Sullivan's letter did not fall on deaf ears. The NAACP campaign against the advertising industry continued through 1964, and elements of Sullivan's arguments were evident in NAACP statements to agency executives. Also, branches of the Urban League, especially in Chicago, continued to press for training programs for blacks interested in agency work. To his credit, John Crichton used his position to press for greater employment of
blacks in the advertising industry. Throughout the mid-1960s Crichton urged advertising agencies to establish training and recruitment programs among the black populations where their firms were based. Eventually the efforts of civil rights activists, government organizations and Four A's leaders bore fruit. The first major advertising training course for minorities was established in the mid-1960s. But the development of the course needed one final push from activists in the Urban League. 99

Advertising Age, the Urban League and the Basic Advertising Course

Civil rights and advertising organizations were not the only groups concerned with the status of black employment in advertising agencies. Publishers among the trade press, most notably those with Advertising Age, examined the issue as well. In 1966, Advertising Age researchers surveyed agencies in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles as to the level of minority employment. While the purpose of the study was quantitative examination, it would ultimately help to lead to one of the most extensive training programs for African-Americans in advertising agency history.

What researchers found in the course of their survey, many considered to be disheartening at best. They found that, while New York agencies were ahead of their counterparts in the other two cities in black employment, there was a considerable gulf between agency rhetoric and action on the matter. For their part, agency representatives continued to argue that, although they wanted to hire qualified blacks, there were not any available. However, African-Americans who had either sought employment in an agency, or who ran placement firms,
had a different analysis. One black employment specialist said, "Sure agencies say they want to hire Negroes, but few of them are making any efforts at all to inform Negroes of the opportunities in advertising. And when a Negro is genuinely qualified, it's far more difficult for him to get hired than it would be for a white applicant." Another black employment counselor argued that, even though the blacks they sent out for interviews were qualified for the advertised positions, they had placed only 12 out of 100 applicants in agencies. John Rawsthorne, a black employment counselor in Chicago, noted that agency representatives were often friendly and encouraged him to send black applicants, but their encouragement did not translate into job offers. One New York-based employment specialist noted that some agencies, such as J. Walter Thompson, Doyle Dane Bernbach, and Foote, Cone & Belding, had aggressive recruitment programs but that they were the exception rather than the rule. He also noted that he had received an increased number of calls for black applicants after the CORE/CIS pickets outside Benton & Bowles. Nevertheless, he was not optimistic that the pressure would lead to significant changes in agency employment practices. Furthermore, he argued that many who professed a desire to increase the number of black employees were "phonies" and "foot-draggers" who only wished to avoid pressure and maintain the current state of affairs.

Among agencies in the survey, those located in Los Angeles had the lowest number of black professionals. After an exhaustive search, reporters were able to locate only one black advertising professional in the city. In addition, the Los
Angeles advertising community lacked the training and recruitment mechanisms that were available in Chicago and New York. While Chicago agencies had at least been involved in discussions about increasing black employees, the number of blacks in Chicago agencies also remained small. Meanwhile, New York had the largest number of black professionals, and agencies there had a number of training and recruitment efforts designed to increase that figure. Also, New York state's fair employment laws had been enacted ahead of those in other regions of the country, meaning that agencies had at least been confronted with the legal ramifications of employment discrimination at an earlier time.

Furthermore, editors found that representatives at New York agencies were much more willing to discuss and be quoted as to their agency position on black employment. Agency representatives in the other two cities were often more guarded in their comments, did not want their agency name listed in the story, or were resentful of the pressure being applied to the industry. One Chicago executive lamented, "Let's face it, it sticks in a white man's craw to be told that he has to go out of his way and mount special programs to give Negroes an opportunity in advertising. Nobody else is given, or expects, such preferential treatment."  

Yet not all agency representatives were critical or resentful in their assessments of the pressure being applied to the industry. Another Chicago executive allowed that "It's probably a valid charge that agencies don't recruit and train enough." This same executive went on to note, however, that when he needed to hire someone he did not have time to discuss it with civil rights
groups. Another executive who had consulted with the Chicago Urban League on minority hires, argued that the League wanted to place blacks in positions they were not qualified for and that members of the League were "difficult to work with."\textsuperscript{104}

Despite the critical reception of the pressure applied by civil rights groups, the story concluded that there was room for agencies to do even more to increase the number of black employees. One week after the story, a follow-up editorial echoed the point. The writer argued that the industry had to be more creative in its efforts to encourage and recruit blacks to the agency business. Furthermore, the author reasoned that agencies should move away from basing the motivation for their programs on thoughts of moral justice or that it was the "right thing to do." Instead, agencies should recognize blacks as an "untapped resource" where "the fresh approach and the creative idea not imagined in our dominantly 'white' world might exist." In other words, agencies should recruit blacks as employees because they would bring an alternate, and ultimately desirable, perspective to the industry. The editorialist argued that there was something positive to be said for racial diversity. A diverse advertising industry, he reasoned, would be more effective in speaking to a diverse nation of consumers. Therefore recruiting blacks went beyond morality and it was something that should be done to create a better advertising community and nation.\textsuperscript{105}

The reporters for \textit{Advertising Age} not only surveyed those connected with the advertising industry on the subject of minority employment, but they also contacted civil rights organizations. W. Hampton McKinney, director of the
Chicago Urban League's employment department, responded to criticism of his organization by arguing that the hiring problem came from the agencies themselves. McKinney noted that in 1964 the League and the Chicago council of the Four A's had agreed to set up a training program for blacks interested in advertising work. Several discussions between the two groups resulted in a verbal agreement for the League to forward the resumes of black applicants to the Four A's who would then select the participants for the program. Once selected, students would be given a scholarship funded by the Four A's to attend the classes. Yet despite the League's forwarding the resumes of several prospective applicants, no actual program ever resulted from the discussions.

When questioned, one agency representative reasoned that the people who the League had selected were too old (their late 20s and early 30s) to enter the agency field. He also speculated that some were already making an income greater than that they would receive as new agency hires and would be unmotivated to seek agency work. Moreover, this executive also noted that the discussions between the League and the Four A's proved that "the top agency men in this city are interested in and will support such a program given the proper circumstances."106 "We also now know," he continued, "that it is a mistake to let the Urban League screen the people for our profession. We should have done the screening ourselves."107 After hearing the agency explanation for the program's demise and the professed openness of agency executives, McKinney sarcastically noted, "Around here we spell hypocrite 'L-l-b-"
He remained unconvinced that any training program would ever result from the discussions between the League and the Four A's.

Ed Brandford, owner of one of the oldest black advertising agencies in the nation, echoed McKinney's criticism. In a letter to Advertising Age, Brandford allowed that, while he did "have an axe to grind," on the subject of blacks in advertising, the advertising business was controlled by "lily-white policies" that purposely limited opportunities for blacks. He argued that advertising agencies continued to maintain barriers that limited the competitive potential of black-owned firms and that limited the numbers of blacks in the industry. Moreover, "this whole disgraceful policy is dismissed, condoned, or covered up by individuals and institutions with influence enough to make a change." Effective change, both Brandford and McKinney recognized, would have to come from the top, from high-ranking agency executives.

One month after the Advertising Age survey, McKinney sent a follow-up letter to the journal. He reiterated that the original training program had indeed been halted by the Four A's. The résumé's that had been sent to the group, he continued, had been meant only to start a dialogue. The resumes were selected in order to set the proper parameters for the referral system. McKinney reasoned that the League wanted to secure agency input so as to select people with the proper qualifications. He said, "There was no expectation that the persons represented by the resumes submitted would be included in a training program. The question asked was, 'Are these the type of people we should consider?'." After sending the resumes to the Four A's, there had been no contact from the
organization other than the announcement to cancel the training program. After
the Advertising Age survey was published, though, the Chicago Urban League
and Chicago Four A’s had resumed discussions of the training program. The
ultimate result of these discussions was the Basic Advertising Course.

Although the Advertising Age story was one of the catalysts for the formation
of the Basic Advertising Course, there were a number of additional sources
responsible. The Chicago Urban League and Chicago council of the Four A’s
had resumed discussions and begun outlining the structure of a course to train
blacks for the advertising agency business. Bob Ross, Bill Sharp’s mentor, was
chairman of the Chicago Four A’s and he believed that something should be
done to increase the number of blacks in the industry. Unbeknowst to those
involved, going on virtually simultaneously with the discussions between the
Urban League and the Four A’s, were conversations among Sharp and other
blacks in the industry about the dismal nature of black employment. Tom Burrell,
Frank Mingo, Frank Daughton and others joined Sharp in these discussions.
There were, it seemed a number of blacks in the Chicago advertising business
who wanted to increase the presence of blacks in the industry. They believed
that there were a other blacks that would be interested in joining the advertising
business if the proper training vehicle were available. Hence once Sharp, the
Chicago Four A’s and the Urban League came together, the Basic Advertising
Course (BAC) was the result. The Four A’s provided the money and helped
secure classroom facilities, while Bill Sharp recruited the faculty.

Notwithstanding, while the general ideas and money for the course came from
different organizational sources, the specific design of the course rested with Sharp, Vernon Fryburger, chairman of the department of advertising at Northwestern University, along with some input from Bob Ross.¹¹²

The BAC was designed to do three things: First, the BAC was to structured to equip black students with the tools they needed to acquire a professional job in an agency. Sharp reasoned that there were enough blacks in non-professional areas in the industry, the challenge would be to increase the number of black copywriters, art directors, and account executives. Second, in the long term, the course was set up to increase the number of black professionals available to work in advertising. The BAC was something that Sharp believed could provide rigorously trained, motivated people to agency personnel directors, thereby alleviating the oft-used rationale that their were no qualified blacks available.¹¹³

Third, Sharp believed that the course would bring talented people into advertising who might not have otherwise considered it for a career. “My aim,” he said, “is to bring the very best people I can to this business—people I believe will make a bonafide contribution to advertising. This is my primary motivation—not just to integrate the advertising business.”¹¹⁴ Agency personnel had often complained in the trade press about the lack of talent available for agency work. Sharp, as had a number of others, argued that blacks could serve as a wellspring from which to draw talented people who might bring a different perspective from that already in the business. Sharp believed that blacks unique vision of the “American Dream” gave them the potential to become some of the industry’s best copywriters. He observed:
It's amazing just how smart so many black folks are, because you had people who'd never heard of an agency before and they can write, or they can be art directors, or they can be analysts for the media department, or they can be assistant account executives. Based on, one, their raw knowledge and intellect that's inherent, and, two, on their profoundly American aspirations.\textsuperscript{115}

Increasing the number of blacks in the industry would contribute an alternate vision of the American dream, and it would help to make what was a racially homogenous agency, that purported to speak to a racially heterogeneous nation, more reflective of that diversity. Blacks could help enhance the ability of the members of the advertising industry enhance their ability to communicate—and sell goods—to all consumers. Sharp reasoned:

You have an industry that purports to depict America, the real America, and they can't because they're too limited in their knowledge and experience. Plus they don't feel as though they really need to. Much of it is not malicious, much of it is not because they're prejudiced, much of it is benign. It's an attitude born of 'Oh, we don't need to know that,' or 'I don't need to learn your culture, you need to learn mine.'\textsuperscript{116}

Blacks, he believed, could help alleviate the advertising industry's cultural deficit to the benefit of all concerned.

Students were drawn to the BAC by radio advertisements written by Sharp. The ads discussed the opportunities available in the advertising industry to those with the proper talent and willingness to work hard. The final portion of the ads told those interested to contact Sharp for an interview. During the initial meeting Sharp carefully screened each applicant before admitting him or her to the course. Sharp recalled, "The recruiting revealed to us that there was a plethora of people interested in getting into this business, but most of them didn't know either anything about it, or very much about it."\textsuperscript{117} When screening students,
Sharp looked for “high motivation” and “the ability to communicate verbally and in writing.” He wanted to be sure to select students who not only had the talent and motivation to complete the course, but also to succeed in the industry once they had graduated. Sharp’s evaluation removed one of the main stumbling blocks from the original Four A’s and Urban League discussion—the professional evaluation of course students. Sharp was a veteran adman with years of experience and was well qualified to evaluate potential. Once selected, students were enrolled in the class free of charge and expected to attend each of the sixteen course sessions over the thirteen-week duration.

The first thirteen-week course was taught in 1966 at Northwestern University. Subsequent courses were moved from the Evanston campus and held in various advertising agencies around Chicago. Course material focused on the media and creative sides of agency work. Sharp concluded that the media and creative areas of an agency were the ones most likely to employ those with no experience in advertising. Therefore, focusing on those areas gave students the largest possible number of opportunities for securing employment. Courses were taught primarily by black advertising personnel but there were some white instructors who taught classes or gave guest lectures. Students were also assigned to advisors who were agency employees and who further immersed them into agency life through agency visits and other informal arrangements. Students also completed assignments that had to be submitted for appraisal by the faculty.
Prior to graduation, students were required to do a formal presentation to students and faculty that would be suitable to do before a prospective employer.¹²⁰

Sharp wanted to produce graduates who would not require agencies to lower their standards in order to employ. Therefore, the course requirements were rigorous and if not followed the offending student was dismissed. Attendance was required at each class session, and students dressed in professional attire. Missed assignments, tardiness, or the lack of quality work were all potential reasons for dismissal. The BAC was designed to create advertising professionals, not to be a pass-through course that did not prepare students for the realities of what they would face in the business. Sharp believed that blacks in advertising were already under a microscope, and that those that came out of the BAC would be even more so. Accordingly, he wanted to be sure that students were adequately prepared to face any potential challenges. He emphasized, “My goal is to have this class looked upon as a gem—that it develop such a character that people will say, ‘Hey, look at the guys coming out of the Basic Ad Class. They’re a group of tigers.’”¹²¹

Moreover, Sharp wanted students to be as widely employable as possible. Consequently, students worked on mock advertising campaigns designed to reach the general, rather than black consumer market. While being a specialist on the black consumer market might be a way to gain entry into an agency, Sharp believed that it could also keep blacks from branching into other types of accounts. Also, in part because of the small number of black-owned agencies,
students were prepared for work in mainstream agencies. Through their advisors, students had contact with personnel inside major agencies prior to graduation. Also, some agencies, like J. Walter Thompson and Leo Burnett, agreed to hire a set number of course graduates each year.\textsuperscript{122}

But after the initial year of the course, Sharp found difficulty in finding jobs for course graduates. Although some agencies had agreed to hire graduates there were not enough guaranteed positions available and students had to go through the regular interview process. During that process many of the graduates found that, despite their affiliation with the BAC, many personnel directors were loathe to hire them. While this was not necessarily a function of racism, it did serve to discourage both Sharp and the graduates. Consequently, Sharp went to the Four A's board of governors and urged them to do more to help blacks enter the agency business:

They [blacks] don't talk like white folks. They don't dress like white folks. They see life differently and sense life differently. But they're not sick, they're not crippled. Can they build a marketing plan? No. A media plan? No. A research project? No. A new creative concept? No. Kinds of reminds me that the young white people we hire—men with a bachelor's degree or a master's degree or even a Ph.D.—are equally innocent of experience in building marketing plans or media plans or research plans or creative plans.... I ask only to see young black people given their chance...I ask only that you find a new kind of standard to help young black people to get a chance to succeed or fail.\textsuperscript{123}

Sharp encouraged agency leaders to agree to guarantee at least some of the students from the BAC, or to initiate training courses of their own. At a minimum, however, Sharp asked that persons be guaranteed the opportunity for agency work if they passed a requisite training course.\textsuperscript{124}
Ultimately Sharp's methods were proved mostly successful. Although not all jobs were guaranteed, most graduates of the BAC gained employment in major advertising firms. Also, one of the graduates, Carole Williams, founded and currently maintains her own advertising agency in Los Angeles. The BAC ran for three years, ultimately disbanding when Sharp briefly left the advertising industry for government employment.

Despite the success of the BAC, one area in which Sharp believed he made a "major mistake" was in not providing students with support after they had obtained agency jobs. In retrospect, he recognized that "simply getting a job in an agency was not enough." In addition to getting the job, students needed to be acculturated to the ways and means of conducting business in a large white corporation, especially one in which there were few other professional blacks around. Students, Sharp believed, would have been far better able to persevere in advertising if they had access to a mentor such as he had in Bob Ross. A mentor would have been able to educate course graduates on the unwritten rules of behavior and success that went along with agency work. Consequently, had such mentors been available, the success of the BAC in getting students into agencies would have been accompanied by having larger numbers of them advance to the professional levels he himself had achieved.

Forward Into the Golden Age

The early and mid-1960s witnessed a great degree of public pressure on the executives in the advertising industry to alter their racial policies. The various civil rights and government commissions that pressured the industry succeeded
In getting advertising agencies to contribute to and increase their emphasis on
the training and recruitment of minorities. One result of this new emphasis, the
Basic Advertising Course, tangibly increased the number of black professionals
employed in mainstream firms in Chicago. Also, groups like CORE and the CIS
had successfully pressured at least one agency to re-commit to a policy of open
hiring and promotion.

In spite of the increased numbers of blacks in mainstream firms, however, the
actual numbers of blacks in the industry remained small. By the end of 1967, it
was clear to industry observers that the numbers of blacks in agencies had
increased, but that they remained distressingly low. One study by the Equal
Employment Opportunity Commission, found that blacks occupied only 3.7
percent of the white-collar jobs in 13 major advertising agencies. Moreover, as
one Media/Scope editorial writer noted, blacks continued to be restricted from
jobs that required client contact. Blacks were accepted into agencies for internal
positions, but the jobs that required meetings with corporate clients—the jobs
that were the "road to top jobs in agencies"—were denied to them. Thus even
though the number of blacks in mainstream firms was increasing, many blacks
were locked outside of the specialties that would lead to professional
advancement.

Still, as David Sullivan had predicted in 1964 the pressure on advertising
agencies to increase the number of blacks continued to increase. As the nation's
cities exploded in 1968, intense pressure began to build on many in the business
community to do something to help alleviate the social and urban crises. The
members of the advertising industry responded by opening up even further opportunities for African-Americans. The difference, however, was that African-Americans began to demand more than statements about open hiring policies. Instead, blacks demanded that agencies provide greater access to training in order to increase the pool of persons available to join a company through its open hiring policies. Supporting the move to racial inclusion were governmental organizations who pressed the advertising industry to do even more on the issue of equal employment opportunity.\textsuperscript{131}
Notes


9 Ibid.


11 Ibid.


13 Ibid., 96


15 "Discrimination?", 96.

16 Letter to the Editor, Advertising Age (May 6, 1963): 168.


Ibid.


"Cut Ads to Subsidize Ghetto Prices, B&B Told," Advertising Age (September 19, 1966): 1, 80.

"Picketers Propose Benton & Bowles Train Underprivileged for Ad Jobs," Advertising Age (September 26, 1966): 2, 170; On internal CORE opposition to the Image campaign see Meier and Rudwick, 310.


Meier and Rudwick, 374-408.


51 Ibid.


57 Ibid.

58 Ibid., 128.


60 Quoted in Ashby, 171.

61 “NAACP Tells 4A’s of 5-Point Program,” 1, 128.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid. Most major organs of the trade press reported that the NAACP had presented a set of five demands to the advertising representatives. One magazine, however, Sponsor, reported that there was a sixth demand that called for: “Recognition of the Negro press and an unrestricted use of advertising in all media.” See “NAACP Advertising Demands,” Sponsor (September 9, 1963): 3.


65 Ibid. There are no records of the attendance figures for the meeting but accounts in the trade press suggest that it was very well attended.


69 Ibid.

70 "NAACP Tells 4A's of 5-Point Program," 128.


75 Vogl, 2.


77 "Two Views of Negroes in TV," 52.


84 Statement to the New York City Commission on Human Rights, February 17, 1964, Papers of the NAACP, Part 24, Series A, Reel 25, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid.


Ibid., 141.


David Sullivan to John Crichton, February 17, 1964, Papers of the NAACP, Supplement to Part 13, Reel 14, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. Also see “Breakthrough in Civil Rights in Advertising Applies Only to Use of Negroes in Ads, Ad Job Seeker Says,” Advertising Age (March 9, 1964): 92.

David Sullivan to John Crichton.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid., 44.

Ibid., 44.

Ibid., 44.

Ibid., 44.


Feehery, 44.

“The Untapped Resource,” 44.

Ibid., 44.

“IAdvertising is Still ‘Shutting off’ to Negroes,” Advertising Age (February 27, 1967): 68.

111 Ibid.


113 Sharp, interview by author; "Chicago Agency Men Train Negroes for Ad Careers," 75; Sharp, 25-27.

114 “Chicago Agency Men Train Negroes for Ad Careers,” 75.

115 Sharp, interview by author.

116 Ibid.

117 Sharp, interview by author.

118 Ibid.

119 “Chicago Agency Men Train Negroes for Ad Careers,” 75.


121 Tom Burrell, interview by Author; Bill Sharp, 44.

122 Sharp, 29-30 Barton Cummings, Address to the Audit Bureau of Circulations, October 22, 1969, Barton A. Cummings Papers, Box 2, Folder 3, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.


124 Ibid., 122.


126 “New Graduate Group Ready for Ad Field After Completion of 4A’s Basic Course,” Advertising Age (July 21, 1969): 118.

127 Bill Sharp, interview by author.

128 Ibid.; Tom Burrell, interview by author.


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131 "Positive Hiring Policy Emerged as a Result of Negro Boycott," 3, 71.
CHAPTER 5 – 1968-1975

The Advertising Industry and Equal Employment

The years between 1968 and 1975 were tumultuous for the citizens of the United States. Two major leaders, one political and one social, were assassinated, and the nation's cities exploded in a series of bloody riots. Also, the armed forces were drawn deeper into the conflict in Vietnam and, as a result, the student movement became even more confrontational. In addition, one president, Lyndon Baines Johnson, chose not to seek the renomination of his party for the election of 1968. A few years later, his successor, Richard Nixon, resigned from office in order to forestall impeachment charges. Finally, when it appeared things could scarcely get worse, the country became mired in a recession that would last until the end of the 1970s. To paraphrase Charles Dickens, for many Americans, these were the worst of times.¹

For those in the advertising industry as well the years between 1968 and 1975 were a period of intense changes. In fact, the years between 1968 and 1975 can be characterized as the Era of Social Responsibility in the advertising industry. Scholars have often criticized the institution and practice of consumer product advertising for lacking a sense of social responsibility. In his classic work, People of Plenty, historian David Potter argued that advertising had "no social
goals and no social responsibility."² Though Potter advanced his argument in 1954, few subsequent scholars have challenged his depiction of the industry. Instead, studies of advertising have continued to advance the conclusion that the practitioners of the institution lack any sense of social responsibility, and instead choose to focus solely on the sale of goods and to encourage consumers to make even greater numbers of purchases.³

But had historians more closely examined the years between 1968 and 1975, they would have found evidence of the members of the advertising industry involving themselves in several social causes. Advertising men and women used their talents on behalf of ending the war in Vietnam, women's rights, and in a variety of measures connected to the civil rights movement. Much of this newfound responsibility was forced on the industry by government and social and civil rights organizations. Representatives from the advertising industry were called before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to explain the dearth of minority employees in the industry. Industry representatives also continued to answer the charges of discrimination coming from members of the New York City Commission on Human Rights. Still, leaders of the industry voluntarily initiated a number of the efforts.⁴

But the criticism of the industry came from many quarters. The perceived racial practices of advertising agencies were critically lampooned in a movie directed by Robert Downey, *Putney Swope*. The hit movie chronicled the experiences of personnel within an advertising agency after it was taken over by a black man. Upon taking command of the agency, the new leader, Putney
Swope, fired all whites from the board except for one whom he named “Mr. Token.” Under Putney’s control the agency becomes more successful than it had ever been and becomes the leading agency in the industry. Although Downey’s movie was meant to be a comedy, it nevertheless illustrated a critical problem within the advertising industry—it lagged far behind many others in the employment of minorities.⁵

Yet in fact, the leaders of the industry had made a start to improving minority employment. The Basic Ad Course was in operation in Chicago, and the leadership of the Four A’s encouraged members to actively recruit black employees. Also, some agencies, like J. Walter Thompson, were engaged in active recruiting programs among black college students (see Chapter 4). Nevertheless, advertising executives were pressured to go even further in their efforts to increase black employment in the industry.

The industry response to the pressure was a “tremendous push” of training and recruitment programs designed to increase the pool of minority employees. Agency executives reached out to civil rights groups, black colleges, and employment agencies in an effort to meet the demands of the civil rights groups and of the government commissions. Industry leaders were by this time aided in these efforts by a group of blacks within the advertising industry who organized the Group for Advertising Progress to increase the numbers of blacks in advertising. Executives and members of the trade press responded favorably to the results that the pressure was generating in the industry. The net result of these efforts was a substantial increase in the percentage of blacks working in
mainstream advertising agencies. The potential impact of the programs was limited, however, by the economic recession that began in the early 1970s. As a result, advertising billings declined and agencies began to lay off staff members. Nevertheless, even with the initiation of staff reductions, by the early 1970s there were greater numbers of blacks in mainstream agencies than there had ever been.6

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

In January 1968, the EEOC conducted a series of hearings on discrimination in white-collar employment. New York City was the site of the hearings, chosen because it had the highest concentration of white-collar employees in the nation. Also, the city served as the headquarters of a number of the nation's leading corporations. For the advertising industry, the location was even more appropriate because 50 percent of all national advertising was placed by agencies located in New York City. Furthermore, "Madison Avenue" had long been considered the traditional center of the nation's advertising industry.7

Each day's hearings began with a research report that gave an overview of the findings on the employment statistics of various industries. Witnesses from representative companies followed the reports with prepared statements that were then followed by questions from the committee. In several cases the employer representatives were preceded or followed by persons who had sought work in the industry in question.8

The third day of the EEOC hearings was reserved for the communications industry. Industries included in the hearings were advertising agencies, book
publishers, magazine publishers, and radio and television broadcasters. Commissioners grouped these industries because personnel were expected to excel in areas related to creativity and verbal skill, rather than be required to have college degrees or high test scores. Commissioners presumed that each of these industries also had a high degree of mobility. Persons who worked in the communications industries often moved from company to company or within the different industry groups. What separated the communications industry from all others was that member companies occupied a position of "awesome influence" on the public that was far greater than the number of employees indicated. One EEOC member argued, "These industries play a role more significant than all others in reporting and interpreting events, molding public opinion, and creating popular tastes and attitudes. It is they who can most readily establish the intellectual climate for significant social change." 

Charles Markham, the EEOC Director of Research, delivered the report describing the employment statistics for the five elements of the communications industry, starting with the advertising industry. He immediately noted that among peer communications industries, the hiring record of the advertising industry was poor. The industry was the largest employer of the group, but among the 64 agencies detailed in the report, totaling 15,679 white-collar employees in New York City, only 406 blacks were employed. Furthermore, closer inspection revealed that the majority of the 406 blacks were concentrated in clerical positions. Table 5.1 summarizes the findings of the commission:
When the report detailed the numbers of blacks at the executive levels, the advertising industry fared better among its peers, but the figures were lower overall. Table 5.2 summarizes the results of the commission:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City Average</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Publishing</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio and Television</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodical Publishing</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Publishing</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2: Negro Participation: Officials and Managers by Industry Percentage

Among all professional employees in the advertising industry, fewer than 1 percent were black. Markham also noted that among the 12 largest advertising firms, three agencies accounted for a large percentage of blacks employed in the industry. Markham did not list the agencies by name, but together they
accounted for over 30 percent of all black white-collar workers and 40 percent of all other black professionals. Furthermore, the three agencies accounted for most of the recent increases of black employees in the industry.\footnote{12}

Markham reasoned that the advertising industry's record of minority hiring indicated that some companies were taking the issue of equal employment seriously, but that most were not. Moreover, if the leaders of the industry did not take minority employment seriously the entire nation would be impacted. He reasoned, "The failures in communications may in the long run have consequences more serious than in any of the others because of these employers' great responsibility as the opinion and taste makers in a grave period in our national history."\footnote{13}

Members of the commission unanimously agreed with Markham's position. Echoing arguments made by civil rights activists in the early 1960s, members of the commission argued that if the racial makeup of the communications industries did not become more reflective of that of the nation, a distorted image of the nation would remain unchallenged: "In the TV era, nearly a generation of minority youths has grown to adulthood with the vision of a world in which material benefits and comforts are rewards solely for those with fair skins."\footnote{14} Changing the racial makeup of the employees of the communications industry was presented as one measure that would help the industry use its "immense powers for shaping the public will" in a positive manner.\footnote{15}

The testimony of those affiliated with the advertising industry came during the afternoon session. Testifying on behalf of those who had sought employment in
the industry was Emmanuel Robinson, a black man who had been employed in various capacities in the industry. In relating his industry experiences, Robinson noted that he had been turned down for agency jobs for a variety of reasons, none of which were connected to his talent or experience. He was rejected in one department where there was already one black employee. The department manager had refused Robinson a job because he considered more than one black in the office "excessive." On another occasion he was denied employment because the position for which he was applying required client contact. Officially he was told that while the agency might like to hire him, it could not do so at that time. Unofficially he found out from an acquaintance in the agency that the reason was because the client might be so offended by the presence of a black man that the account would be withdrawn. "The reality is that the blame for the low proportion of Negroes in white-collar jobs," Robinson argued, "lies in the history of conscious exclusion of Negroes from these jobs by employers and not in some fancied lack or deficiency or shortcoming among Negroes themselves." Robinson allowed that some progress had been made, but advertising agencies continued to argue that there was a lack of blacks available to hire. Moreover, he admitted that the numbers of blacks with experience in agency work was not great but he reasoned that such a deficit could be rectified. Robinson argued that the federal government and civil rights organizations had to maintain pressure upon the industry to see that
opportunities were available to blacks and other minorities. He concluded, "There has to be a push from behind, rather than leaving the question completely to the hands of the employers." 18

Robinson’s testimony echoed that of other witnesses who had also sought employment in advertising. Witnesses, for example, like Saundra Sharp, revealed that having experience was often not enough to result in employment. Sharp, a black woman, had come to New York City seeking work in the advertising industry, but, despite some years of experience in radio-television production, had only received offers for secretarial work. Sharp echoed and extended Robinson’s testimony and provided a damning picture of employment opportunities for minorities in advertising. The complimentary testimony revealed that blacks had difficulty in even gaining the opportunity to interview for positions, let alone actually being offered employment after an interview. Sharp and Robinson acknowledged that advertising was a "notoriously tough business to break into," but they argued that blacks found chances more limited than that of other racial groups. Consequently, backed by Robinson’s and Sharp’s testimony as well as employment figures, members of the commission were eager to question witness from the employer-side of the advertising industry. 19

Appearing on behalf of the advertising agencies were John Devine, vice-president at J. Walter Thompson, and Richard Scherzer, director of personnel at Grey Advertising. A third representative, from the Lennen & Newell agency, was scheduled to appear but was asked instead to submit his testimony in writing. 20
Devine began his testimony by detailing Thompson's historical employment of blacks. In 1963 Thompson executives, prompted by the company chairman, concluded that they needed to initiate an effort to generate greater numbers of minority employees. While Devine credited the company chairman with leading the effort to recruit minority employees, he did not acknowledge any additional sources. The chairman of the Thompson agency was a member of the board of directors of the Four A's, and as such was in the position to know of the external pressure being applied to the industry by the Urban League, CORE and the NAACP. So, at least coincidentally, the Thompson program was initiated around the same time as the civil rights group pressures on the industry. Regardless of the sources of the program, Thompson management committed itself to identify and recruit qualified minorities to the company.

In designing the program, executives made what Devine considered to be two key decisions. First, they were committed to the principle of not lowering the company's standards for employment or job performance. Second, it was decided that the company would seek out blacks for clerical positions, with the goal being that those persons would eventually be trained for advancement to the professional ranks. The goal of the program was to recruit individual blacks to the company and then train them to become copywriters, artists, account representatives, researchers, and media experts—the primary positions at the agency. Consequently, prospective recruits did not need to possess all of the knowledge necessary to occupy these positions immediately, but they needed to have the capacity to be trained. Devine noted, “We felt then and still do that a
true measure of success would depend upon our ability to develop writers, artists, account representatives, researchers and media specialists—in other words, the key jobs in our business.”

Devine also described what he believed were the key difficulties in increasing the number of minorities in the advertising industry. Among those blacks with some knowledge of the industry, there was an inclination not to join for fear of being the lone black person in the office or one of the few in the industry. But, the larger problem was that there were fewer jobs available in advertising than there were candidates to fill them. Thompson, like many other agencies, was faced with a limited of black applicants, but an abundance of overall job candidates. As a result, there was no reason to search for additional employment candidates when personnel directors already had an ample supply. Nevertheless to increase the pool of available black applicants, Thompson executives had engaged in a series of proactive steps, including: participating in professional recruiting seminars aimed at blacks, recruiting black college students, advertising in equal employment opportunity directories, hiring black employment agencies, working in concert with civil rights groups to find black job candidates, supporting organizational efforts, like that of the Four A’s, to raise the number of black employees, and utilizing existing black employees to recruit other blacks to apply to the company. Devine also noted that among those blacks who had recently been hired by the agency, a large number were still with the company and had in fact been promoted into the professional ranks of the company.
In summation, Devine specified that the company's efforts had raised the percentage of black employees in the New York office from 0.6 percent in 1963 to just under 5 percent in 1968, nearly a 500 percent increase.23

After the conclusion of his prepared statement, members of the EEOC panel questioned Devine. Although commissioners expressed a deep appreciation for the leadership that the Thompson agency executives had taken on behalf of equal employment opportunities, they were less impressed with their record in using minorities in advertisements. The commissioners opened by questioning where the responsibility for the inclusion of minorities in advertising rested. Devine responded, "As Mr. Truman used to say, 'The buck stops here.'" Rather than shifting the responsibility to television and radio executives, magazine publishers, or advertisers, Devine admitted that the responsibility for increasing the use of minorities in ads rested with advertising agencies. Prior to this, in testimony before the New York City Commission on Human Rights and in discussions with civil rights activists, most executives shifted the blame to clients, or executives at television networks. Furthermore, Devine noted that agencies were far from doing a proper job, but that the ongoing efforts to improve the use of minorities in ads would bear results. Devine stopped short of accepting the argument that the lack of minorities in advertisements was the result of conscious exclusion by advertising agencies, but he allowed that, with an "affirmative reminder," writers would readily include minority images. Increasing the number
of minority employees, as the Thompson agency had done, he noted, was one such potential "reminder" that would lead to tangible changes in the racial makeup in the nation's advertisements.  

Devine's testimony was followed by that of Grey Advertising executive, Richard Scherzer. Unlike Devine, however, Scherzer's testimony revealed that Grey Advertising was taking far fewer steps on improving minority employment. After opening with a statement that the agency employed any person with the talent to contribute to the company, Scherzer allowed that most of the black employees were in the clerical area. While this did not necessarily set Grey Advertising apart from J. Walter Thompson, it became clear that Grey did not have the same commitment to training clerical employees. Also, as a smaller agency, Grey did not have the same level of recruitment programs as the Thompson agency either through brochures or recruitment efforts among black college students. Although it was true that Thompson was a larger agency with greater resources, Grey Advertising had no established program, formal or informal, for the promotion of minority employees. In addition, Scherzer noted that the company had few minority applicants for available positions, and that the low starting wages limited the number of experienced black professionals who sought employment at the agency.

At the conclusion of his prepared statement, commissioners critically questioned Scherzer about Grey Advertising's abysmal record of minority hires. Commissioners primarily focused on the agency's lack of recruitment efforts at any black colleges or even within universities in New York City. Scherzer
protested that even if the company was able to find interested black students, doing so would be more harmful than beneficial if no jobs were available. Accordingly, the commission advised that the agency executives should recruit only a few black students for either the existing positions or for some that might be created. After admitting the need for greater equal employment efforts from his agency, Scherzer's testimony concluded (albeit without the statements of appreciation for company efforts from the commission that had been given to Devine).26

In addition, although representatives from the group did not testify during the hearings, the Four A's sent a statement to the EEOC detailing support for equal employment opportunity. The statement described the measures the group had undertaken to increase the level of minority employment in advertising and to improve the racial representations in advertisements. Also, the statement detailed the longstanding commitment of the organization to equal employment opportunity. This position began with the issuing of the 1963 "Statement of Position" on employment: "We believe it is vital to seek out, recognize and employ the best talents available wherever they may be found, regardless of race, color, religion or national origin."27 The Four A's statement was sent to high school and college guidance counselors, and the group published a booklet on opportunities in advertising that included depictions of black employees. Other efforts to increase the number of minorities in the industry included publishing advertisements inviting blacks to join the industry, sponsoring public forums on minority employment and supporting programs like the Basic Advertising Course
that prepared blacks for agency employment. The statement concluded with a quote from the group president supporting the EEOC equal employment program: "It is necessary for us to recruit, train and hire. It is not easy. The present talent pool is not large. But the long-term trend makes it essential that we meet more and more of our growing personnel demands with Negroes."28

The organization also expressed support for improving the racial representation in advertisements: "We have no doubt that Negroes and members of other minority groups must and will increasingly be used in advertising, also that advertisers will give increasing attention to the role of the Negro and other groups in American life."29

At the conclusion of the hearings commissioners warned that if advertising, (along with other industries) did not quickly improve the record on minority hiring and in the use of minority images in advertisements that individual agencies might find themselves facing government prosecution. Yet some of the people participating in the hearings wanted the commission to do more than imply the possibility of government action. During a roundtable discussion, Herbert Hill, labor secretary of the NAACP, warned the commission that "voluntarism" was not working in any industry in America and that the threat of prosecution was not enough to spur action. Although not commenting specifically on the advertising industry, Hill argued that nationwide hiring figures demonstrated that individual companies were ignoring the spate of executive orders and federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination. He admitted that some companies had voluntarily initiated effective employment programs, but even among those
programs more needed to be done to increase blacks' level of white-collar employment. Moreover, he believed that several companies seemed to be openly challenging the government to take some action to enforce existing laws. Therefore, Hill maintained that the EEOC had to initiate prosecution of recalcitrant employers immediately and use its powers to force companies to institute fair hiring practices. Unfortunately, Hill's arguments were not supported to the point that the EEOC became an active investigator of discrimination. Instead, the commission functioned largely in the capacity of a reactive body that acted only when individual cases were brought to its attention.\(^\text{30}\)

With the prominence of advertising industry in the EEOC hearings, the event received extensive and supportive coverage in the trade press. After the hearings concluded, an editorialist in *Advertising Age* lauded the commission's goal of increasing minority employment. Disappointed by the fact that advertising lagged behind other industries in terms of minority employment, the author argued that the industry would have to greatly increase its efforts to attract minorities. Furthermore, if sufficient numbers of experienced minorities could not be located, advertising agency executives would have to institute training programs to create their own experienced minority pool. Training, the writer reasoned, was the single most effective way to increase the numbers of minorities in the industry as well as to increase the pool of those available to hire. "Jobs are a key point," he argued, "and every company, every agency and every person simply must do whatever is needed to bring about a solution to this serious problem."\(^\text{31}\)
The involvement of the EEOC with the advertising industry did not end with the 1968 hearings. Instead, members of the commission continued to monitor the industry and agency executives' efforts on behalf of minorities. One year after the hearings, Clifford Alexander, chairman of the EEOC, sent a letter to Advertising Age commending the industry for its efforts following the hearings. Alexander singled out for special praise the industry-wide efforts at increasing the minority presence in advertisements. He stated, "The advertising industry deserves commendation for this notable progress in the utilization of minority group members."\(^{32}\)

Although he did not pause to discuss the specific agency efforts in terms of hiring, Alexander took the increased presence of minorities in advertisements as evidence that the industry was progressing in its employment efforts as well. In a somewhat convoluted manner, Alexander believed that since having more minorities in the industry would result in more minorities in ads, then the increased presence of minorities in ads meant that there were more minorities in the industry. Alexander conflated the issue of minority representation in advertisements with the minority presence in the industry. Nevertheless, in response to Alexander's letter, (perhaps recognizing the flaw in the chairman's logic) an editorialist argued that the industry could not rest on the commissioner's praise and cautioned that "a great deal more must be accomplished to really put things in balance."\(^{33}\)

The EEOC, though more reactive than proactive, also continued to investigate cases of employment discrimination. In 1972 the commission ruled on charges
of racial discrimination filed by Georg Olden, former vice-president at the McCann-Erickson agency. Olden, who at the time of his dismissal had been one of the highest-ranking blacks in the advertising industry, believed that he was fired solely on account of his race. Employed at McCann-Erickson for seven years, Olden argued that persons at the agency had "managed to deny me, because of my race, positions for which I was qualified. This made me vulnerable to dismissal." He reasoned that there had been a pattern of discrimination that had kept him near the professional level he occupied when initially employed.

Olden's case came before the EEOC only after being rejected by both the New York City and State Commissions on Human Rights. The city commission ruled that there had been "no probable cause" for Olden's complaint. Supporting the ruling by the city commission, the state commission pursued a similar line of reasoning and ruled in favor of McCann-Erickson. But the ruling of neither commission indicated an appreciation of Olden's base charge. He contended that discrimination had kept him professionally limited and thus left him in position to be dismissed rather than being in place at a higher level. Each commission, however, focused on the firing itself. Consequently each commission had no choice but to rule in favor of the agency because representatives could demonstrate that Olden's position was eliminated through cost cutting measures that also affected a number of other employees.

In 1972, nearly two years after his dismissal, the EEOC also ruled against Olden's complaint. Echoing the ruling of the two New York commissions, the
EEOC ruled that race was not a factor in Olden’s dismissal. The EEOC investigation convinced them, however, that there was "reasonable cause to believe" that McCann-Erickson had a discriminatory hiring policy. During the Olden investigation the EEOC found that the agency’s percentage of black employees was 7 percent. Although this was a significant increase over the level at the time of the original EEOC hearings—3 percent—it was well below that of the percentage of blacks in New York City, which rested at 22 percent. Thus, while Olden’s charge was denied by the EEOC, the attention that the case brought to McCann-Erickson led to an investigation that renewed interest in agency hiring practices at a time when such interest had waned. So, in the long run the Olden case may have led to greater opportunities for other minorities seeking employment at McCann-Erickson and other agencies.\(^\text{37}\)

The Olden case illustrates the reactive, or at least far removed, position of the EEOC on the issue of minority employment in advertising. Although the commission had held very high profile hearings in 1968, after the conclusion of the investigation the group was reduced to acting as a monitor and adjudicator. When individual cases, like that of Georg Olden, came before the commissioners their attention refocused on the industry. Outside of those instances, however, the EEOC had little involvement with the advertising industry. The governmental organization most involved with the alteration of agency employment patterns (despite the ruling in the Olden case) was the New York City Commission on Human Rights.\(^\text{38}\)
The New York City Commission on Human Rights

The New York City Commission on Human Rights (NYCHR) had been involved with the problem of minority employment in agencies since 1963. After a series of initial hearings, commission maintained an active interest in increasing minority employment and in improving racial representations in advertising. In 1968, however, the NYCHR interest in the two issues greatly increased. In his work Race Relations and the New York City Commission on Human Rights, political scientist Gerald Benjamin noted that changes in the commission’s leadership had led to members changing their perception of the role of the commission. He argued, “There was a conscious move away from conciliation and toward a policy of law enforcement. Discriminators were viewed, not as innocents who had wandered from the path of righteousness...but as violators of the law who would be made to pay to the full extent for their actions.” The commission, Benjamin argued, mirrored the developing militancy among minority citizens and began to play a more vigorous role in ending discrimination. Consequently the advertising agencies based in New York City, found themselves under pressure from the NYCHR to improve both their use of minorities as employees and figures in their advertisements.

Two months after the EEOC’s 1968 hearings, the NYCHR held similar hearings investigating the use of minorities in advertisements and employment in agencies. Prior to the hearings, commissioners surveyed leaders of the top 50 agencies in the city on the use of minorities in advertisements and on the numbers of minorities (focusing on blacks and Puerto Ricans) they employed. 

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Lead counsel for the NYCHR, Michael Vallon, termed the commission's findings "appalling," while a reporter labeled them "lamentable and distressing."

Regardless of one's choice of description, the survey indicated that there were distressingly few blacks and Puerto Ricans employed in the advertising industry and far from enough representations of either group in advertisements. NYCHR chairman William Booth, echoing the arguments of civil rights activists and the EEOC, noted that the lack of minorities in advertisements was "Harmful because the public then sees the Negro and Puerto Rican solely as a rioter, a social problem and not as a human being." Furthermore, in terms of employment, among those minorities who were in the industry, the majority were clustered in the lowest skill categories. Figures indicated that no more than 15 blacks had reached the level of account representative, and only four were at the executive levels. Table 5.3 summarizes the survey findings:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>% Black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration &amp; General Management</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Account Handling-Client Service</td>
<td>2,222</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing and Merchandising</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy</td>
<td>1,450</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualization</td>
<td>1,272</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio-TV Production</td>
<td>906</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>1,969</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print Production</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity &amp; Public Relations</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Processing</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretaries</td>
<td>3,727</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting, Billing, Checking</td>
<td>1,635</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Others (Messengers, Mail Room Clerks, Etc.)</td>
<td>1,627</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>17,967</strong></td>
<td><strong>635</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3: Minority Group Employment in New York Advertising Agencies by Category

The report also contained employment statistics for each agency that sent representatives to the hearings. Table 5.4 summarizes the findings of the commission:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>% Black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gardner Advertising Company</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geyer, Oswald</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batten, Barten, Durstine &amp; Osborn</td>
<td>1,296</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCann-Erickson</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cunningham &amp; Walsh</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D'Arcy Advertising Company</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young &amp; Rubicam</td>
<td>1,897</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sullivan, Stauffer, Colwell &amp; Bayles</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted Bates &amp; Company</td>
<td>1,178</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MacManus, John &amp; Adams</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warwick &amp; Legier</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benton &amp; Bowles</td>
<td>977</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Esty Company</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogilvy &amp; Mather</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenyon &amp; Eckhardt</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancer-Fitzgerald-Sample</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compton Advertising</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ketchum, MacLeod &amp; Grove</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marschalk Company</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Walter Thompson Company</td>
<td>1,676</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doyle Dane Bernbach</td>
<td>1,299</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey Advertising</td>
<td>1,173</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foote, Cone &amp; Belding</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norman, Craig &amp; Kummel</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needham, Harper &amp; Steers</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo Burnett Company</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These numbers only represent those employed in each agency’s New York offices.

Table 5.4: Minority Group Employment in New York Advertising Agencies by Agency

With the employment statistics as support, commissioners questioned agency representatives on their firm’s performance on racial issues.

In response to the inquiries of commissioners, advertising representatives followed one of two courses. Some claimed that their company had
anti-discrimination policies, or that they could not find qualified minorities—though it was not for lack of effort. But other agency representatives, admitting that their agency had distressingly low numbers of minority employees, presented outlines of programs for training and recruiting more blacks. John Elliot, chairman of Ogilvy & Mather, outlined his plans to train high school students for entry level jobs in the secretarial and clerical areas. Furthermore, the agency had plans to establish college scholarships and to reserve some positions to be filled by black college graduates. Robert Pruett, vice president with Warwick & Legler, outlined his company's plans for a program called Operation Ad Start. The Ad Start program called for the creation of at least five permanent jobs that would be filled by minority high school students or minority Vietnam veterans. A number of other agency representatives including those from Kenyon & Eckhardt, Ted Bates, Marschalk & Company, and Grey Advertising, also outlined prospective training and recruitment programs. 

After hearing the agency responses, commissioners told agency representatives that having an open hiring policy or training programs in the planning stages was not enough. Instead, commissioners informed agency representatives that they had to be proactive in their efforts to find minority employees. In addition, Booth informed agency representatives that the issue of the "under-utilization of Negroes, Puerto Ricans and other minority groups," would not disappear until significant progress had been made. Moreover, the
possibility of prosecution under federal anti-discrimination statues would remain open. Booth bluntly told agency representatives that the “pressure will stay on” until the “imbalances” in minority employment were rectified.46

Echoing the findings of the EEOC, commissioners indicated that they considered the issue of minority hiring in agencies more important that simply the providing of jobs. Because of the influential power of advertisements, commissioners believed that the enhancement of minority images in advertisements was vital. In her work, *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben and Rastus*, historian Marilyn Kern-Foxworth argued that commissioners believed that the presence of minorities in the advertising industry would lead to an improved portrayal of minorities in ads. Bringing more minorities into the agency business, they conservatively argued, would, in addition to providing job opportunities, help enhance the image of minorities in America and help to alleviate social unrest.47

Some agency executives protested that the only responsibility of agencies was to sell products, or that advertisements lacked the power to influence social change. Michael Vallon, chief counsel of the NYCHR responded, “If you fellows can’t change attitudes and create attitudes, then you’ve been taking a lot of good money from a lot of people under false pretenses. You can mold opinion.”48 The presence of minorities in agencies, Vallon reasoned, would enhance an agency’s ability to meet both the sales needs of the client and the social needs of the nation. In other words, bringing minorities into agencies would help agencies fulfill their social responsibilities.49
Reporters for the trade press and some agency executives strongly criticized the performance of industry representatives before the NYCHR. Furthermore, they strongly urged agency leaders to take a more involved interest than was apparent at the hearings. Persons below the management level represented several agencies at the NYCHR hearings and some reporters viewed that as evidence that the hearings were not taken seriously. Furthermore, most of the witness had made a poor showing before the commission. One reporter labeled the advertising representatives “living examples of poor advertising.” He continued:

For people engaged in the communications business, they seemed surprisingly inept at getting across a point of view forthrightly and affirmatively. Nor were they very impressive as creative minds at work on problem solving. They seemed to vie with one another in confessing that they were ineffective at attracting desirable Negro talent... It seemed an awkward stance for people who earn their livings by counseling clients on tough marketing, merchandising and advertising problems.50

Although some agencies were on their way to establishing training and recruitment programs, much more remained to be done. Therefore, editors encouraged all agencies to begin to implement some sort of program to increase their numbers of minority employees.51

Some agency executives, who sensed a similar lack of interest among some agencies, echoed the editors’ arguments. John Elliot contended that, “You can't count on personnel directors to set policy, even if they grasp the situation. And I’m sorry to say you can't count on all of them to grasp the situation.”52 Barton Cummings, chairman of Compton Advertising later echoed Elliot’s comments. He noted, “Corporate policy, never opposed publicly, never denied publicly, was
administered so as to protect the status quo—and most of us simply let it go at that.\textsuperscript{53} Elliot’s and Cummings’ arguments seemed accurate; one personnel director was overheard remarking during NYCHR hearings, “We’re overreacting to this Negro thing. It’s just a virus, and like all viruses it will go away."\textsuperscript{54} Elliot, Cummings, and others argued that to implement effective integration efforts, agency leaders had to communicate clearly throughout the company their interest in increasing the numbers of minority employees.\textsuperscript{55}

After the NYCHR hearings concluded, the commission continued to monitor the status of minority employment in advertising. In May 1968 these monitoring efforts led to the commissioners publicly charging ten companies, including two advertising agencies, with employment discrimination. The charges were particularly troubling because one of the agencies targeted, Ogilvy & Mather, was considered to be a leader in the movement to increase the number of minorities in advertising. One of the agency’s founders, David Ogilvy, served as chairman of the New York committee for the United Negro College Fund. Also, during the NYCHR hearings held two months earlier, company chairman John Elliot was hailed by many as the leading example of an executive working on raising the level of minority employment. A reporter lauded Elliot’s performance by noting that if “a client account had been on the line,” Elliot’s efforts would have won the account for his agency. He also served as chairman of the Four A’s equal employment opportunities committee that was responsible for developing employment programs for the advertising industry. One week before the discrimination charges were made public, Elliot had told agency executives that
having an “open door” policy to minority employees was not enough of a proactive effort to make an impact. Instead, he argued that agencies had to pursue “an affirmative program that seeks out minority group employees, encourages their interest and provides development opportunities for them,” like that in place at Ogilvy & Mather. Furthermore, a member of the NYCHR had informed Elliot that Ogilvy & Mather’s training and recruitment programs “should serve as a model for the industry.” Thus, in terms of minority hiring, Ogilvy & Mather seemed to be an example of what was “right” among agencies.

The impetus for the charges of discrimination at Ogilvy & Mather are unclear. In terms of the number of minority employees, the agency was near the middle among peer agencies. Hence it is unclear whether the charges stemmed from an individual or if the commission had other reasons to place the agency under investigation. Nevertheless, once discrimination charges against Ogilvy & Mather had been filed by the NYCHR, company representatives were required to meet with the commission. During a series of meetings the agency representatives and commissioners worked together to establish a program to deal with the problem area. Agency executives agreed to place their help wanted ads in a wider variety of media directed at minorities, including in black-owned newspapers and on radio shows directed at black listeners. They also agreed to continue their program of actively recruiting minorities to employment at the agency. The largely amicable meetings between the commission and the agency led to NYCHR chairman Robert Magnum publicly lauding executives for being open to the commissions suggested changes. He noted, “They have set a
wonderful example for the rest of the industry and the country." The renewed emphasis of decision makers at Ogilvy & Mather to proactively seeking black employees helped them to continue to increase the number of blacks in the industry.

Despite the pressure applied by the NYCHR, by the end of 1968 only a modest improvement in minority employment in advertising had occurred. Although a number of programs had been initiated, the level of minority employees remained low. It seemed, as John Devine had informed the EEOC, that the issue could not be solved overnight. An additional problem was that a number of agencies had begun to lay off employees in an effort to cut costs and increase revenue. Hence minority employees faced the traditional problem of "last hired, first fired" in that being the persons with the least seniority meant they were the first to be dismissed. But in spite of the streamlining ongoing in the industry, the NYCHR continued to insist that minorities be given access to employment opportunities. During hearings in early 1969, Booth indicated that if the coming year he did not witness greater improvements, agencies with the worst hiring records would face commission inquiry. Many commission members believed that, aside from issuing or expressing statements of interest, agency executives "have not given this project the deserved priority, nor have they applied to it the same skills they brought to other activities." Also, among the agency leaders who had indicated a desire to establish training and recruitment programs, commissioners believed that too many were either still in the planning stages or needed to be more vigorously pursued.
In the effort to increase the number of minorities in advertising, the commissioners overlooked some important developments that the industry had underwent in recent years. One very troubling issue to the commission was the idea that many advertising executives had raised the level of employment criteria far in advance over what was in place in earlier years. A commission report concluded, "The advertising-TV business grew up in a slap-dash fashion with men who now run the business developing their talents in an experimental fashion, at a time when no Negroes were in the field. Now these same men set up guidelines for employment that freeze out potential black executives."® This point was echoed by Harold Lewis, black president of a recruitment firm, who noted that advertising "often regards its disciplines as extreme and hard to learn when in fact they are not—this mystique can make young Negroes feel inadequate when in fact they are not."®

Both the commission and Lewis, however, overlooked the fact that advertising education in the nation's universities had led to a large pool of individuals who sought employment in the industry and had both professional experience and a college degree. Thus advertising agencies were confronted with the proposition of having a large pool of talented candidates from which to choose their employees. Because advertising was not a course of study at many historically black colleges and universities, blacks were not part of that educational pool. Meaning that agencies had to overlook talented and experienced whites in favor of talented, but less experienced or trained blacks.
Because of a seeming lack of commitment on the part of many agency executives, the NYCHR recommended that agencies implement a three-point program to increase minority employment numbers:

1. The advertising industry [should] examine its insistence on prior experience as a qualification for employment, especially in such positions as account executives, and consider instead how potential ability can be recognized and developed.
2. Professional trade unions, such as the American Federation of Television & Radio Artists, [should] try to find ways to enforce the anti-discrimination clauses in their contracts.
3. Admen and broadcasters [should] use their sales talents to convince Negroes and others who have become accustomed to having doors closed in their faces that there are opportunities for them in the world of advertising and broadcasting.64

The commission’s arguments did not go unheeded among advertising decision makers. In response several agencies greatly increased their recruitment and training efforts among minorities. Agency representatives actively began to seek out blacks with the skills to be part of the advertising industry. Leaders also initiated efforts to provide training opportunities to those who lacked the existing skills but were able to learn them. Some agency decision makers had begun to make plans for training and recruitment efforts as part of an internal effort on the part of the company. But the continuous pressure of the NYCHR, undoubtedly played a role in the creation of such programs among agency executives who lacked the commitment or interest to establish such programs on their own.65

Conclusion

The combination of external pressure from the EEOC and NYCHR and the internal efforts in some agencies, led to an explosion in the number of training
and recruitment programs aimed at minorities. But the strong government interest in the industry exhibited between 1968 and 1972, was not replicated in the mid-1970s. The NYCHR, although the group continued to exist, was wracked by successive changes in leadership and organization that hampered the ability of the commission to pressure agency leaders. In addition, the EEOC continued to investigate individual cases of discrimination, but focused attention on the industry only at those times rather than in large public hearings. Moreover, while some civil rights organizations maintained an interest in industry hiring figures, the focus was nowhere near the intensity generated during the late-1960s or early-1970s. While employment discrimination was still an issue the sense of immediacy had dissipated, and organizational and public attention was drawn elsewhere. Still, the training and recruitment programs generated in the industry demand exploration. This subject is taken up in the next chapter.66
Notes


4 The advertising industry was not the only industry to be encouraged to increase their involvement in social issues. On the business community and social responsibility see Steven M. Gelber, *Black Men and Businessmen: The Growing Awareness of a Social Responsibility* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1974).


8 Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, 2.

9 Ibid., 326. The Kerner Commission echoed the EEOC's appreciation of the need for greater racial representation in advertising. The final report of the commission stated, "Any initial surprise at seeing a Negro selling a sponsor's product will eventually fade into routine acceptance, an attitude that white society must ultimately develop toward all Negroes." See Report of the

10 Ibid., 331.

11 Ibid., 335.

12 Ibid., 325-329.

13 Ibid., 326.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., 388.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., 390.

19 On Saundra Sharp's testimony see Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, 14-22.


22 Ibid., 417.

23 Ibid., 418-419.

24 Ibid., 428-429.

25 Ibid., 431-433.

26 Ibid., 434-435.

27 Ibid., 692.

28 Ibid., 698.

29 Ibid., 792.

30 Ibid., 490-493.


34 "Olden Firing is Part of Staff Cuts: McCann, Advertising Age (February 15, 1971): 14.
35 Ibid.


38 It was not until 1972 that the EEOC had the power to both investigate and prosecute cases of employment discrimination. On changes in the EEOC see Richard B. Freeman, *Black Elite: The New Market for Highly Educated Black Americans* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976): 121-125.


40 Benjamin's was a contemporary assessment of the future utility of the NYCHR and as such, contains limited information about specific investigations conducted by the commission.

41 Maurine Christopher, "Racial Imbalance in Ad Agency Personnel is Termed 'Appalling,'" *Advertising Age* (March 18, 1968): 86.

42 Ibid., 1.

43 Ibid., 86.

44 Ibid., 1, 86.

45 Ibid., 86.

46 Ibid., 1; Maurine Christopher, "No Letup in Push for Minority Hiring: Booth," *Advertising Age* (March 25, 1968): 3. During the years covered in this study no evidence was found of an agency having been convicted under federal anti-discrimination laws.


49 Ibid.


51 Ibid.


53 Barton Cummings, Address to the Audit Bureau of Circulations, October 22, 1969, Barton A. Cummings Papers, Box 2, Folder 3, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

54 Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid.


Ibid.


Ibid.

Christopher, "Gains in Minority Hiring People Seen Minimal," 82; Cohen, 5.


CHAPTER 6 – 1968-1975

Training and Recruiting African-Americans for the Advertising Industry

In the wake of the EEOC and NYCHR hearings, a number of advertising organizations and agencies launched genuine, but experimental, efforts designed to raise the number of minority employees. Although the EEOC and NYCHR had focused their energies upon employment opportunities for blacks and Hispanics, many of the training and recruiting efforts focused most heavily on blacks. One reason for this was that agencies often worked closely with established civil rights groups, whose efforts were targeted toward blacks. Also, some of the training and recruitment efforts came from blacks who were already employed in the advertising industry. In addition, there was not a pool of quickly identifiable and accessible Hispanic college students like that available in the nation’s black colleges and universities.

Suggestions for solutions to the racial composition of the industry came from various places. A group of university professors suggested that agencies partner with university advertising programs and establish training centers around the nation. Some blacks already in agencies reasoned that training programs should be established within agencies that focused solely on preparing blacks for professional work. Agency executives argued that blacks should be brought into
the clerical areas of agencies and then advanced slowly to the upper ranks of professional work. Yet among those involved in the effort, most agreed that agencies could not focus solely on blacks with industry experience and gain significant results. Instead, most believed that education had to be combined with work opportunities in order to increase the pool of minorities and to yield the most immediate results.  

Training and Recruiting Blacks

American Association of Advertising Agencies

Since the early 1960s, the Four A's had been involved in a variety of efforts to get more blacks into the advertising industry. The organization had an established policy on equal employment opportunity, and the group had often been the go-between for civil rights groups and government commission's interested in the advertising industry. Therefore, as the leading organization for the industry, the position of the Four A's on the issue of minority employment proved to be critically important for encouraging agencies to create greater opportunities for blacks and other minorities. The efforts of group leaders in the late-1960s and early-1970s showed their clear commitment to increasing opportunities for minorities.

Although the Four A's was already involved in efforts to generate increases in minority employment, after the EEOC and NYCHR hearings group leaders reiterated their commitment to the task. During the 1968 Four A's convention, held a few weeks after the NYCHR hearings, the issue of black employment was considered one of the top issues facing the industry. In fact several persons,
including Maxwell Dane, co-founder of Doyle Dane Bernbach, Barton Cummings, chairman of Compton Advertising, and James McCaffrey, of LaRoche, McCaffrey & McCall, listed black employment as the number one issue facing the industry.  

Speaking on behalf of the executive board of the Four A's, John Elliot, criticized agency representatives for doing too little in regards to minority employment. He urged the representatives to create a program that would "seek out minority group employees, encourage their interests and provide development opportunities."

Moreover, addressing himself specifically to agency executives in the audience, Elliot urged them to take an active interest in developing employment programs for their companies. He noted, "Nothing will happen in the use of minority group talent unless we [executives] set the policy, unless we make that policy known to all our staff, unless we set up the procedures to make it work, unless we cope with the occasional client who drags his heels."

Elliot also informed agency executives that their programs would have to tackle the "root" of the problem with minority employment—training and education. He cautioned them not to expect quick results, but to instead focus upon creating a talent pool of black employees. Elliot advocated a plan that called for the creation of education-work programs that taught blacks the basic elements of advertising and then gave them the opportunity to put the education into practice. Elliot's plans apparently struck a chord with the audience as it
"was greeted with prolonged applause by the agency management men in the room." Furthermore, Elliot's remarks were reprinted in the trade press and enthusiastically supported by editorials in *Advertising Age* and other journals.

The Four A's efforts on minority employment went beyond informing member agencies of what they should do on the matter. The group leaders also created some programs and supported those established by others. The Four A's had lent support to the Basic Advertising Course and later, using that course as a model, created a program focused on getting blacks into the secretarial and clerical areas of agency work. In a cooperative effort with five advertising agencies (Ted Bates & Company, BBDO, the Interpublic Group, J. Walter Thompson, and Young & Rubicam), the New York City Board of Education, the New York City Human Resource Administration, and a group of minority employment specialists, the group created a program targeting underprivileged minorities. The program was designed to place minorities in clerical positions with agencies with the provision that further training for professional work would be made available. Each of the agencies involved in the program agreed to provide jobs for graduates of the program and also to provide them further training and professional opportunities.

In addition to the clerical training course, the Four A's also sponsored scholarship and internship programs for minority students. In June 1968 the group announced that 25 scholarships in the amount of $10,000 would be available for minority students. Students were to use the scholarships to attend an advertising course taught at the Borough of Manhattan Community College or
City University of New York. Students were required to possess at least a high school diploma, but persons with college degrees were also admitted to the program. Faculty from the two respective colleges taught the advertising course accompanied by guest lectures that were given by agency personnel. Unlike participants in the clerical course students were not guaranteed agency jobs. They were, however, given instruction in the interview process and other techniques for gaining agency employment.8

While a great deal of the Four A’s activity on minority employment focused on the economically underprivileged and high school-aged students, there were also programs specifically for black college students. The group sponsored an eight-week internship program that paired students from black colleges with advertising agencies. Each agency provided students with living expenses, a salary, and training in a variety of aspects of agency work. Most of the student training focused on preparing campaigns for the general marketplace rather than to the black consumer market. While this focus was likely a function of what advertising accounts the agency then maintained, preparation for the general market was something that was appreciated by students. One student remarked, “I want to be well rounded and able to sell things to a large audience.”9 Another student noted, “I don’t want to work on the plantation. I’m not going to learn anything if they put me in an all-black shop with black copywriters and artists.”10 The internship program was popular among black students with many participating in the program multiple times. As other programming efforts faded
from view, the internship program became the longest-running equal employment Four A’s leaders developed.\textsuperscript{11}

The Four A’s was constantly active in raising the level of minority employment and in seeking to provide opportunities for minorities at varying economic and educational levels. Also, the organization’s leadership continually encouraged members to make even greater efforts to provide opportunities to minorities. But without the support of the individual agencies, the efforts of group leaders would have amounted to little. The Four A’s was a collection of individual agencies who voluntarily participated in group initiatives. Notwithstanding the fact that the group was the leading organization within the advertising community, leaders had little power to compel agencies to follow their lead. Hence it is clear that throughout the late-1960s and early 1970s among agency personnel there existed a considerable degree of interest on the issue of minority employment.\textsuperscript{12}

\textit{Regional Advertising Organizations and Advertising Clubs}

In terms of organizational efforts, the national Four A’s was not alone in designing programs that targeted minorities. In June 1968 the Western States Advertising Agencies Association (WSAAA), an organization comprised of agencies primarily based in Southern California, initiated an advertising course directed at young black men in Los Angeles. The course, the Burt Wilson Watts Advertising Workshop, trained students for positions in advertising agencies. What made the Wilson course unique was that it was an effort by the leaders of agencies that had virtually no black employees and were far removed from the pressures applied by civil rights groups and the EEOC and NYCHR. The Watts
workshop was therefore largely a voluntary initiative on the part of some advertising agencies. The interest by agencies in the course was such that one reporter remarked, "Afro-Americans and Mexican-Americans are being wooed as never before by agencies in this city." The courses were taught at UCLA, and graduates received a certificate in advertising training. Although graduates were not guaranteed jobs with local agencies, they were provided contacts through which to gain interviews.

The Wilson course was accompanied by a training program sponsored by the Los Angeles council of the Four A's. This course was taught at the University of Southern California, and it provided students with both educational and work experience in advertising agencies. Agencies paid between $850 and $950 to sponsor students for the course, and they agreed to provide them with work opportunities. The course emphasized introducing students to agency work and with generating "good will and public relations among the black and Mexican-American youth" in Los Angeles. But, despite the fact that the course focused mainly on generating interest and good will, the course was effective. A number of graduates went on to agency work, and among those who did not, most remarked that they were left with a "positive" impression of the industry.

In Michigan, the state council of the Four A's partnered with Wayne State University to create a course entitled "Careers in Advertising," designed for minority students. Thomas Pride, a black account representative with J. Walter Thompson, directed the course. The faculty was comprised of black and white advertising personnel from Detroit agencies. The course was 22 weeks in
length, and applicants to the program had to demonstrate an aptitude to do college level work. Unlike the training course sponsored by the national Four A's, the Michigan course focused on preparing students for work in the professional areas of agencies. Course leaders credited the program with eliciting considerable interest among Detroit-area students. In addition, agency executives credited the program with helping to increase the number of blacks in area agencies.¹⁶

Along with the courses sponsored by the Four A's and the branch councils, a number of local advertising clubs implemented efforts to bring minorities into the industry. In Boston, the Advertising Club initiated a program to provide work for teenagers interested in advertising. The group also provided some training for recent high school graduates to prepare them for work in the industry. The programs were a combination of education in advertising techniques and work opportunities. Students who completed the program were given assistance in locating jobs in the local advertising community.¹⁷

Also, the Adclub of Cleveland sponsored a program called FATE—Find, Attract, Train and Employ—for black students in the city. The FATE program was part of a larger advertising school that was maintained by the group. David Skylar, an executive with the club stated, “For years the communications industry in this area has tried to find qualified black people to join the staffs of the respective companies. We finally came to the conclusion that if we wanted qualified black people, we had to help them become qualified.”¹⁸ Consequently, students in the program received training in the professional areas of agency
work. Students were also given scholarships that covered tuition, books, and other costs associated with participation in the program. Upon graduation students received certificates of completion and assistance in finding work in Cleveland agencies.¹⁹

Like the programs established by the national Four A’s, state and local organizational efforts to increase minority employment were possible only with the support of local agencies. Each of these programs was a small effort, often attracting only 10 to 15 students per course. Nonetheless, each program helped to raise the number of minorities in the advertising industry. Also, the programs helped to inculcate minorities who may have had little or no prior knowledge of the advertising industry with at least a basic knowledge of its function.²⁰

Agencies throughout the nation participated in programming efforts sponsored by organization bodies, but a number of other agencies initiated efforts on their own. Several agency executives helped to establish training and recruitment efforts distinct from those that work sponsored by advertising organizations.

**Individual Advertising Agency Programs**

Shortly after the conclusion of the 1968 NYCHR hearings a full-page advertisement appeared in the *New York Times* with a caption reading: “Who says there are no Negroes in the advertising business? I’ve heard of five.”²¹ The advertisement was the inspiration of the executive staff of the Daniels & Charles agency. The group had considered running the advertisement for some time but
declined on the basis that it seemed "too self-serving." But, after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., executives concluded, "The hell with it; someone has to do something, so let's run the ad."^22

The text of the advertisement described the hiring experiences of Laurence Dunst, senior vice-president and creative director of Daniels & Charles. Over the preceding five years Dunst had hired over one hundred persons and interviewed hundreds more. But, in that period he had never hired a black art director or copywriter because he "never saw one." He noted, "And my case is not unusual. The facts are obvious. The advertising business is one of the most racially unbalanced industries in America."^23 Although he did not consider advertising personnel to be "bigots or racists," Dunst accused them of having done next to nothing to alleviate the problem. Consequently, he and other Daniels & Charles executives had agreed that the agency would establish a scholarship program that would enable black students to attend art or business schools. Still, Dunst did not even consider the efforts of executives at his agency to be satisfactory. Therefore he challenged both leaders in his agency, and others in the advertising industry, to do more on the matter. He stated, "We need advertisers to endow more scholarships. We need agencies to set up training programs for every phase of our business that will recruit some members from Harlem instead of Harvard. We need prominent ad men to speak to, or actually help run special advertising courses for Negro high school students."^24 The ad concluded with the request for all persons willing to "do something" to contact Dunst.^25
The subsequent response to the *Times* advertisement was tremendous. The ad appeared in the Monday edition of the *Times*, and by Friday Dunst had received over 300 letters and phone calls expressing interest and offering support. A number of agency executives had promised financial and staff support, some major advertisers indicated they would make a contribution. Also, at least one “major foundation” had pledged financial support for the Daniels & Charles scholarship program. The program called for agencies to provide scholarships to individual students and then provide employment for that student for at least 12 months. Students were to take courses that would enable them to work in the creative areas of advertising. Dunst and others involved in the design of the program emphasized creative work because it allowed those new to the industry the best opportunities for advancing to other areas of professional work. Also, work in the creative areas provided students with the most immediate opportunities—beyond the secretarial pool—to enter an agency. The duration of the Daniels & Charles scholarship program is not known, but it helped to catalyze the discussion of ways to improve minority employment.26

The interest that surrounded the ideas expressed in the Daniels & Charles advertisement was replicated in other agencies as well. In July 1968, executives at Doyle Dane Bernbach announced a partnership with the National Alliance of Businessmen (NAB). The two parties also received funding from the federal government and the New York State Employment Service. The partnership between the agency and the NAB led to the creation of a training program for minorities. The training was geared to reach minorities who lacked the basic
educational requirements for agency work. There were no educational requirements for admittance to the program, and students received an education in reading and mathematics, as well as in typing and other clerical skills.\textsuperscript{27}

The Doyle Dane Bernbach program targeted persons considered to be part of the "hard-core unemployed." After the urban riots that erupted in 1968, the NAB organized a series of recruiting efforts targeting the hard-core unemployed. Group leaders presumed that it was the unemployed persons in the cities who were the primary riot participants. Consequently, they conservatively hoped that enhancing employment options would relieve the tensions that underlay the unrest.

Because of the group targeted by the program, leaders decided that all who expressed an interest in participating would be able to do so. Thus, students who entered the course came with varying degrees of educational attainments. The only requirement students faced was that they be able to read at a tenth-grade level by the completion of the course. Several students entered the program reading at only the third or fourth-grade level, but by the end they had met the basic requirements. After completing the educational requirements, students were advanced into the entry levels of agency work. In the mornings, students attended classes, and during the afternoon they worked in various areas of the agency. After doing introductory-level work around the firm, students were placed into a department to continue their training. Agency executives did not view the course as a means to increase their professional-level black employees, but they hoped to "make a dent" in the overall level of employment options.
blacks in the agency. While the program did not focus on professional employment, it was nonetheless an important part of the overall training effort initiated by advertising executives. 28

In Chicago, executives at Foote, Cone & Belding created “Operation College Bound.” The program was directed at area black high school students, and organizers sought to introduce them to the innerworkings of an advertising agency. An additional goal of the program was to encourage students to advance their educations beyond the high school level and, if interested, eventually work in an agency. During the eight-week program, students worked throughout the agency in the mornings and took classes in economics and marketing during the afternoons. Also, students were given the opportunity to create some advertisements for existing and introductory products. The program accepted only 7 to 10 students per summer, but it succeeded in encouraging students to go to college, and the experience left several with a desire to work in the advertising field. 29

In a move similar to that of Foote, Cone and Belding, executives at Campbell-Ewald established a program targeting Detroit-area black high school students. But, the Campbell-Ewald program also provided participating students with college scholarships. Hence it motivated students to seek higher education and provided them with a means to get there. Students worked at the agency during the summers and upon graduation were awarded scholarships to pursue any college major they desired. Among minority scholarship programs, the Campbell-Ewald program was unique because it did not require students to
major in areas connected with advertising. Hugh Redhead, president of Campbell-Ewald, noted, "We started a scholarship program a year ago to remove economic roadblocks for Detroit high school graduates with the ability and desire to attend college." Hence executives considered the program to be a means to assuming a higher level of social responsibility and community participation. But, executives also envisioned the program as a way to attract more blacks to the advertising industry. Redhead reasoned that the program would help to "open up opportunities in the advertising business and also to attract bright young talent in the city to work for us." Still, upon graduation from college, students were not required to work for the agency, nor were they promised jobs if they desired to do so.

By the end of 1969 a number of advertising agencies across the country had therefore established programs to increase minority employment. Lacking their own individual programs, several agencies participated in or co-sponsored efforts established by other agencies or advertising organizations. Some of these programs were considered "experimental," while others were envisioned as a permanent part of company efforts. Regardless of the projected duration of the respective program, many agency executives were involved in some type of effort to raise the number of minorities in advertising. Prodding executives to go even further in their efforts was a group of black advertising personnel who came together to form the Group for Advertising Progress.
The Group for Advertising Progress

The Group for Advertising Progress (GAP) was formed in 1968. The organization emerged during the tumultuous events of the decade including the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy, but the organization was not an express response to any of the crises. The group was an effort by blacks working in the advertising industry, and leaders envisioned GAP as an organizational base for increasing the number of blacks in the industry. A condition of membership was that a person be providing a "direct professional contribution" in some phase of advertising. Membership was largely comprised of blacks working within agencies, but was open to blacks working as freelancers or to blacks in corporate advertising departments. Blacks who worked as secretaries, clerks, or in other non-professional capacities, however, were not eligible for membership. Because leaders were focused on the professional level of employment and in increasing blacks presence in decision-making positions, they had a selective membership process. When group leaders went to agency executives to press for increased numbers of black employees they did not want executives to even have the option of placating them with low level job opportunities. Instead, GAP leaders wanted to present the organization as a professional-level group only. Also, although GAP was conceived of as an all-black organization, whites were welcomed to join the group if they agreed "to dedicate themselves to GAP purposes."
Founded with over 100 charter members, GAP was organized around four guiding principles:

1. To encourage advertising organizations to provide greater employment opportunities for minority group people and their services, and to act as consultant to advertising organizations who seek to employ these individuals.

2. To improve the status of minority group persons presently employed by advertising agencies, corporate advertising departments and allied services.

3. To help create among minority groups an awareness of employment and training opportunities in advertising; to recruit qualified minority group people for employment in advertising and specified allied fields.

4. To encourage greater utilization of minority group people in commercials and print advertising to better reflect the ideal American scene.\(^{35}\)

From the late-1960s to the mid-1970s GAP leaders focused most of their efforts towards the first three principles. Although group leaders shared the interest of civil rights activists and others in the image of minorities projected in advertisements, they felt their greatest contribution (and the most pressing need) was in increasing the number of minorities in the industry. Moreover, group leaders believed that if they were successful in the first three points that the fourth would follow as an almost natural result. The group worked in concert with the Four A's to encourage member agencies to create training and recruitment programs and to expand further those already in existence. Members of GAP were involved in panels at Four A's conventions where they spoke on subjects ranging from the current state of blacks in agencies to ways to recruit minorities to agencies. The group also published a monthly newsletter, *Final Proof*,

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updating members and interested parties on organizational activities. Furthermore, by the early 1970s GAP leaders became the recognized organizational voice for blacks in the advertising industry.\textsuperscript{36}

As in the listed goals, in addition to establishing partnerships with advertising organizations, members of GAP established programs to create more potential black advertising employees. Also, programs were initiated to help blacks already in the industry update their skills. Among those not already in the industry, GAP leaders focused their efforts on black college students, the most likely pool from which to draw future advertising professionals. While it was possible to attract black professionals from other related areas, the low starting salaries for persons with little to no experience in the industry was a heavy deterrent for them. College students, GAP leaders reasoned, were already prepared to accept entry-level wages, and could be more readily persuaded to join the industry. Working in concert with the Urban League and the Four A's, GAP members organized an advertising training program at Howard University and Morehouse College, two of the most prestigious historically black schools in the nation.\textsuperscript{37}

In the course of the college program, GAP members acted as “revolving faculty” at the two schools and gave lectures on advertising and business topics. The goal of the program was to motivate students with interest in business or creative fields to take an interest in the advertising industry. Although there was some interest in advertising among black college students, GAP members believed that too few students knew enough about the industry. Instead, blacks
with an interest in business focused their efforts on other traditional industries. GAP chairman and co-founder Doug Alligood noted, "Because minority-group people don't imagine they can establish careers in advertising, they do not even consider it in their vocational planning." Consequently, a major thrust of the program was to generate interest in and to disseminate information on the advertising industry. Group leaders hoped that as more information became available to black students about the industry, a natural pipeline would be developed from which to draw more blacks into advertising.

But like many white college students, black college students with some knowledge of the advertising work had a negative perception of the industry. As historian Hazel Warlaumont notes in her work, Advertising in the 60s, the agency leaders throughout the industry faced difficulty recruiting college students for employment. While the GAP college program was successful in generating interest among college students, interest did not easily translate into students seeking actual industry employment. Instead, the most successful GAP programs involved blacks already in the industry who welcomed the opportunity to upgrade their professional standing.

Like Bill Sharp, David Sullivan, and others, GAP leaders believed that blacks in the advertising industry faced limited opportunities for professional mobility. Leaders recognized that there were a variety of reasons for the limited options, but most stemmed from a lack of training opportunities for blacks to increase their skills and experience. As a result, GAP leaders established a three-tier seminar program with instruction on account management and marketing, the
creative arts, and media and broadcasting. Courses were staffed with both black and white advertising professionals, and instruction focused on giving blacks the tools needed for professional advancement. Through GAP courses, blacks found a source for training that was often unavailable at their home agencies. For example, experience in creating television commercials was one of the most marketable items that advertising professionals could possess. Blacks, group leaders surmised, lacked access to gaining the experience in creating commercials and thus were limited in their advancement options. Therefore training blacks in commercial creation was one potential way of opening up promotion opportunities for black ad men and women.42

Despite the working relationship between GAP and other industry groups, relations were not always harmonious. One area in which the relationship with other groups was most strained was in the effort to establish training programs for blacks outside of the advertising industry. During the late 1960s, GAP and the Four A’s initiated a number of different programs and courses to attract blacks to advertising. Unfortunately, the partnered efforts had largely failed because neither organization was able to secure job commitments for course graduates. Although the joint efforts had added over 70 black employees to New York agencies, that number was far below what GAP members had hoped.43

A significant deficit in the GAP training program was that, unlike the Basic Ad Course and some other training programs, GAP courses lacked even a small commitment from individual agencies to employ graduates. Another problem was that GAP courses often duplicated existing efforts from advertising...
organizations and agencies. As a result, advertising executives believed they already had enough prospective black job candidates due to their own efforts. Later, when agency leaders began to reduce their training efforts, they declined to hire GAP graduates owing to ongoing staff reductions. Without job commitments as a lure, GAP members found it increasingly difficult to recruit students for their training workshops. Although some GAP members tried to establish informal training programs, they found declining interest in their efforts among blacks not already in the industry.

As the recognized organizational voice for blacks in advertising, GAP leaders sometimes found themselves at the center of controversy. In 1970, members of the organization became involved in a protest effort against the Wells, Rich, Green (WRG) agency. The protest, led by Flo Kennedy of Consumer Information Services (CIS) was directed at what some GAP and CIS members believed were discriminatory employment policies at WRG. During the 1970 Andy Awards, 60 members of GAP and the CIS forcibly halted the presentations. Carrying pickets reading—"Mary Wells Has Got No Soul," and "Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary: Why Do You Keep Blacks Down"—protestors refused to leave until their concerns were heard. Black art director Harry Webber, a member of GAP, stated that the protests to publicize the lack of black professionals on the WRG staff. In rebuttal, a member of the audience argued that talent, not race, dictated employment, but no member of WRG replied to the protestors. Several other members of the audience expressed outrage at the group's performance, and one member of
WRG refused to accept her Andy because the group had been allowed to speak. After having their remarks heard, the protestors left the awards ceremony and continued their protests outside the hotel.45

In 1973, controversy erupted around GAP again when the group called for and received the resignation of organization president, James Harold. What precipitated the controversy was that Harold, an account executive with Young & Rubicam, had accepted the position as head of the black section of the agency's new ethnic unit. Harold argued that he accepted the position as a natural extension of his job responsibilities. Agency executives argued that the ethnic unit had been established to serve clients interested in the black and Spanish consumer markets. Conversely, GAP leaders argued that the ethnic unit was an effort to "ghettoize" black advertising professionals within the agency. Group leaders believed that the existence of the ethnic cell would lead to blacks' being limited only to working on products aimed at the black consumer market. Furthermore, GAP leaders argued that the ethnic cell was designed to take business away from black- and Hispanic-owned advertising agencies. New GAP president Doug Alligood remarked, "Such moves by Y&R and other major agencies are not in the best interest of the total advertising community, and could have a disastrous impact on the future of blacks in our industry."46 It had been Harold's responsibility, Alligood and others believed, to refuse to head the ethnic cell and to work within the agency to see it dismantled. Alligood reasoned, "What we need is full opportunity for blacks, integration at the supervisory level, and some account supervisors who have empathy with specialized markets."47
Some individuals, both black and white, lauded the creation of the ethnic cell as a source to open more job opportunities for blacks and Hispanics. One Advertising Age editorial writer remarked, "We think it would be good for everyone if the Y&R unit grows and opens new jobs." Furthermore, the ethnic unit would become part of the "de-ghettoization" of advertising by providing research figures and marketing programs that would draw the black and Hispanic consumer markets into advertising's mainstream. A white advertising executive echoed this argument, calling the ethnic cell, "an admission that you need specialists in specialized areas—as I think agencies have recognized with women over the years."

On the issue of taking business away from independent black- and Hispanic-owned agencies, some in the industry criticized GAP for trying to protect those agencies from the natural laws of competition. In response, some black advertising professionals argued that the ethnic cell was an admission of the potential power of black advertising agencies. "White agencies fear black agencies getting a foot in the door with part of an account because it could be a 'stepping stone to havoc in the agency' with the other portions of the account going to other ethnic agencies," noted one black agency owner. Other black ad professionals viewed the ethnic cell as admission by a major advertising agency that the black consumer market was a valuable advertising segment to pursue.

In criticizing GAP leaders for opposing the creation of the ethnic cell, both black and white advertising executives missed the group's primary objections. Alligood and other GAP leaders argued that work in the ethnic unit would quickly
become considered as a "black job" and it would become the only area where Young and Rubicam employed black professionals. Therefore, operating on behalf of an unwritten principle of the organization, GAP leaders argued that blacks be allowed to work in all areas of an agency rather than simply on black accounts. Since the inception of the group, leaders focused their efforts on creating: "Negroes who are specialists in marketing—marketing in general, not Negro market specialists." Although several of GAP's leaders and members had started their careers as experts on the Negro market, many felt that doing so had significantly hindered their careers. As a result, agitation against the creation of the ethnic cell was a natural extension of what they viewed as their organizational purpose.

Although GAP failed to eliminate the ethnic unit at Young & Rubicam, the controversy illustrates the changing presence of blacks in mainstream agencies. In 1952, BBDO had established an ethnic unit headed by Clarence Holte and been hailed as leading a major step forward. Twenty years later the establishment of a similar unit was labeled as an effort to "pigeonhole" blacks and to create "career deadends." Black professionals in mainstream agencies sought to have their career paths follow the general market. Also, training programs that were designed in concert with black professionals focused on training blacks to work on the general market rather than the black consumer market. For many blacks in mainstream advertising agencies, the black consumer market had become an option in which they increasingly chose not to
participate. The road to professional advancement in mainstream agencies, many blacks reasoned, was in the general, rather than black, consumer market.\textsuperscript{54}

After the ethnic cell controversy subsided, GAP continued to focus on issues relating to blacks in the advertising industry. Throughout the 1970s GAP remained the leading organizational voice for blacks working in advertising and related industries. GAP members were active in efforts to alter the depictions of minorities on television programs, to place more blacks and women in positions of authority in media industries, and to lobby the government for investigations into discrimination in the advertising industry. Although the group’s efforts at training blacks outside the advertising industry had largely failed, they had led a number of blacks, especially college students, to the industry. Moreover, GAP programs aimed at helping blacks within the industry upgrade their skills were successful. The group also served as place where blacks could express their frustrations and successes in advertising among those of similar mind and experiences.\textsuperscript{55}

\textbf{Impact: Blacks in Mainstream Advertising Agencies}

In 1968, John Elliot charged advertising executives to “do something” to help create more opportunities for blacks and other minorities. While executives may or may not have been responding directly to Elliot’s request, it is clear from the multitude of efforts that emerged in 1968 and 1969 that at least the ideas he expressed were accepted. Assessing the flurry of activity, one reporter noted, “No one is going to look on these events, individually or collectively, as giant strides toward the solution of the problems to which they are addressing
themselves. But they do give a pretty clear indication that there is a great deal of activity, as well as discussion, concerning these major problems, and that there is hope for real accomplishments ahead. 56

Initially, the optimism borne by people who supported equal employment efforts seemed justified. At large agencies, like J. Walter Thompson and Ogilvy and Mather, the number of blacks in the agency grew steadily after the events of 1968. Even more meaningful, the number of black account executives, the persons who had day-to-day contact with clients also grew. Holding the position of account executive was considered a necessary step to reach the level of company officer. Hence some blacks were at least "in the pipeline" to become achieve the level of vice-president or higher. Also, the increase in account executives was indicative of blacks' increasing presence in several different areas of agency work. Although some, both black and white, felt that agencies could do even more in their efforts, in many agencies the overall number of blacks in both non-professional and professional areas was rising. 57

By the end of 1969, the number of minority employees at the 15 largest agencies in New York City had more than doubled. In fact, at some agencies the number of black employees was approaching 15 percent of the total. Lauding executives for their efforts, Elliot urged all agencies to set a target goal of 13 percent minority employees by 1972. Unfortunately, few people were present to hear Elliot's congratulations and target figures. Elliot's speech was part of the closing session of the 1969 Four A's conference, and his appearance was the "second most poorly attended session" there. If the number of audience
members present to hear Elliot's speech was any indication, interest in training and recruiting minorities was waning by late 1969.\textsuperscript{58} Black adman Bill Sharp also doused water on adman who might have been over laudatory for the achievements in employment. "You white advertising folks are a lot happier about the progress of integration than us black advertising folks," he asserted.\textsuperscript{59}

By 1970, NYCHR reports confirmed that in several large agencies minority employment had doubled. While the actual number of minority employees remained small there had been impressive percentage gains during the previous two years. Moreover, even among agencies where there was a decline in the total number of staff members, the percentage of minority employees had either increased or remained constant in all cases save one. Eleanor Holmes Norton, chairperson of the NYCHR, argued that agency executives had "shown definite good faith in their negotiations with the commission and by follow-through with meaningful employment programs."\textsuperscript{60} Table 6.1 summarizes the findings of the NYCHR:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Total Staff</th>
<th>Blacks</th>
<th>% Black Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J. Walter Thompson Company</td>
<td>1,676</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1,821</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogilvy &amp; Mather</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young &amp; Rubicam</td>
<td>1,897</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1,776</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted Bates &amp; Company</td>
<td>1,178</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1,020</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancer-Fitzgerald-Sample</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batten, Barton, Durstine &amp; Osborn</td>
<td>1,296</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1,224</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doyle Dane Bernbach</td>
<td>1,299</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1,248</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compton Advertising</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Esty Company</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey Advertising</td>
<td>1,173</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benton &amp; Bowles</td>
<td>977</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSC&amp;B</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1: Minority Employment of Professionals in 12 Top Agencies Gains over 3-Year Period\textsuperscript{51}
Unfortunately, Holmes' optimism was not met with continued action by either advertising agencies or from the NYCHR. After the 1970 report, the NYCHR ceased the yearly release of agency employment statistics. Although the commission continued to collect the data, agencies submitted their employment numbers voluntarily and knew that there was little punishment for not doing so. The fear of pressure from the commission or public condemnation among advertising executives had dissipated. Since many executives considered their training and scholarships experimental, or at least expendable, when advertising revenues declined in the early 1970s many of the programs were eliminated with no recourse from the NYCHR. Commission members reasoned that they could little expect agency leaders to maintain training and recruitment programs when they were laying off large numbers of experienced staff members.  

As the elimination of training programs and employees expanded, the overall rate of all hiring efforts slowed measurably. A Four A's survey showed that from 1970 to 1974 the number of persons employed with member agencies declined 11.4 percent. Among blacks, although the actual rate of hiring decreased, their percentage of industry-wide employment had increased from 8.9 to 9.9 percent. But the increase had come primarily in the non-professional areas, as the percentage of blacks in professional categories—the decision-making positions—declined nearly one-half percent.  

Even as advertising budgets began to increase in the mid-1970s, however, the number of black employees in mainstream agencies failed to rise. It seemed that, as one reporter observed, "Employment opportunities for blacks and
Hispanics in the ad world improve only when the spigots are forcibly turned on.\textsuperscript{64} While some agency leaders continued to pursue measures aimed at increasing black employees, the programs were often maintained only at the largest agencies or those under investigation for racial discrimination. NYCHR commissioner Frank Mangino noted, “On their own, most advertising agencies are not undertaking the programmatic personnel reforms that companies in compliance with the commission must adopt.”\textsuperscript{65} Among many agencies in which employment policies developed voluntarily, the number of black employees either held steady, or it declined. As one black adman noted, “The [racial] revolution on Madison Avenue is dead forever; from now on it’s all business.”\textsuperscript{66} But, as historian Stephen Fox notes in The Mirror Makers, even though the revolution had ended, “advertising still looked different, in both its people and its products. It more truly reflected American society.”\textsuperscript{67}

\textit{Conclusion}

Unfortunately, the recession of the early-1970s, combined with the declining career opportunities in the industry limited growth in the years after 1972. It became difficult for executives to justify maintaining training programs when they were laying off members of their existing workforce. Yet even though advertising revenues began to rebound in the mid-1970s, the number of blacks in the mainstream industry remained small. Without the pressure from civil rights and governmental organizations some agency leaders found few reasons to reinstitute their former efforts. But the responsibility for blacks' limited employment growth did not rest solely with advertising executives. Blacks had
greater salary and career opportunities elsewhere and, in spite of the educational efforts of GAP and other organizations, an advertising career did not occupy the attention of large numbers of black college students. Therefore, the number of blacks applying for professional positions in advertising remained small, and their numbers as agency employees remained small as well.\textsuperscript{68}

Still, more could have been done to continue to raise the number of blacks in the industry. The reinstatement of training and recruitment programs was one factor that was not initiated after ad revenues began to rise that may have led to further increases in minority employees. Fox argues that training programs failed in teaching blacks the techniques of advertising. He based his analysis on the comments of a frustrated advertising executive. After trying to teach an advertising course to black students, white ad executive Jerry Della Femina concluded, “I had trouble because they live in a different world than I do. They can write black, they can’t write white.”\textsuperscript{69} Fox concluded, “Afro-American culture has been essentially oral and aural without strong reading and writing traditions…. By contrast advertising, even TV advertising, is written and rewritten and worried over down to the last comma. Media, marketing, and contact work also reward advanced language skills.”\textsuperscript{70} Hence, he posited, blacks lacked the cultural tools to become successful in advertising agency work.

But Fox failed to note that a number of training programs had fundamental structural limitations. Specifically, many programs focused on simply getting the maximum number of students possible with little regard for qualifications. As historian Steven Gelber noted in his work, \textit{Black Men and Businessmen}, after the
urban riots in 1967 and 1968 training programs in a variety of industries focused on numbers, rather than ensuring that students met employment standards. Consequently, since there was a focus on quantity, programs had to be focused on raising educational standards or on the lower levels of agency employment. As a result, bringing students up to existing employment standards proved to be a costly endeavor that required more financial and intellectual commitment than many executives were willing to expend. One advertising executive described agency training a "3-for-1 proposition." Meaning that executives first had to find someone eligible for training; then had to take one of their present employees to complete the necessary training; and then had to hire someone to replace the person doing the training for its duration. The end result was another potential employee, but he or she came at the cost of at least two other employees. Still, when training and recruitment programs were in place, they contributed to the increase in the number of blacks in the advertising industry. Also, the training programs were responsible for increasing the pool of individuals able to be hired into black-owned advertising agencies. Many of the persons who owned and staffed black advertising agencies during the Golden Age received their training while working at a mainstream firm. Consequently the programs helped to build a heretofore miniscule segment of the advertising industry. Moreover, the training and recruitment efforts led to significant increases in the number of blacks in both professional and non-professional areas. 71

Also, Fox fails to note that many blacks did not leave the advertising industry because they lacked the cultural or educational tools. A number of blacks lost
their positions as a result of job cuts in the 1970s. Moreover, among those who voluntarily left the industry, many did so out of frustration with a hostile work environment, rather than an inability to do the work. Several blacks reported that they were frustrated by the lack of opportunities for advancement present in the industry. Many blacks felt that they had been brought into agencies only to fulfill affirmative action quotas. Once they were part of an agency's minority count, however, they were not given assignments or instructions on how to move up the professional ladder. As one black ad executive noted, "Being black or Puerto Rican and making it in advertising is still the first, toughest job in America." Beyond reasons of frustration, others blacks left the industry in favor of higher paying jobs in other lines of work.

Just as blacks found greater opportunities for employment in mainstream agencies, however, they also found greater opportunities to become owners of their own advertising firms. A second major facet of the Golden Age, was the participation of blacks as owners of their own successful agencies. Several blacks who had gained their experience in mainstream agencies used that experience to become owners as well as practitioners of advertising.
Notes


4 Ibid.


6 Ibid.


9 Carol Colman, “Black Interns Get Taste of Ad Agency Life; Many Desire Longer Program,” Advertising Age, (September 4, 1973): 34.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.


14 Ibid.; “WSAAA Renews Ad Class Backing for Minority Youth in UCLA Program,” Advertising Age (September 15, 1969): 34.


Ibid.


Daniels & Charles, 67.

Ibid.

Ibid.

"Agency Ad Aims to Help Negroes With Ad Careers," 32; "Integrating the Agencies," Newsweek (April 29, 1968): 29. The duration of the scholarship program is unclear. The effort was not referenced again in the trade press and no mention of the program is made in scholarship lists in the 1970s and 80s.


Ibid.

Ibid.; "Adman Likes View From the Top," 15.

The actual start date for the Group for Advertising Progress is unclear. In his work The Mirror Makers, historian Stephen Fox listed the date for the group’s inception as May 1968. But, contemporary sources indicate that the group was started some time near the end of 1967. The initial leadership of the group was made up of six men: Douglas Alligood, account executive at BBDO; Edgar Hopper, account executive at Foote, Cone & Belding; Ben Wright, marketing executive at Bristol-Meyers; Charles Jenkins, account executive at Foote, Cone & Belding; Heywood Hart, copywriter at J. Walter Thompson; and Tom Sims, marketing executive at McCann-Erickson. On the various social and political crises in 1968 see Jules Witcover, The Year the Dream Died: Revisiting 1968 in America (New York: Warner Books, 1997). •

"Negro Admen Point Finger at GAP," 56-57.


"Negro Admen Point Finger at GAP," 53-54.


"University Courses, TV Workshop Planned in Effort to Help Negroes Enter Ad Field," Advertising Age (November 25, 1968): 19. On Doug Alligood and GAP see, Stein, 156-157


"University Courses, TV Workshop Planned in Effort to Help Negroes Enter Ad Field," 19.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

"Negro Admen Point Finger at GAP," 58.

54 Ibid.; "Negro Admen Point Finger at GAP," 57-58.


60 "Dozen Agencies Increase Minority Hiring, Reports N.Y. Rights Unit," Advertising Age (May 18, 1970): 96.

61 Ibid.


65 Ibid.

66 Webber, 2.

67 Fox, 299.

68 "Minority Hiring Dips at 7 Shops," 85. On the racial discrimination charges filed against agencies and the impact of the recession on advertising budgets, see Fox, 314-321.

69 Ibid., 321.

70 Ibid., 320


72 Stein, 158.

CHAPTER 7 – 1968-1975

Part I – Black-Owned Advertising Agencies: Those That Perished

In the late 1960s the number of blacks working in the advertising industry grew at a rapid pace. As detailed in the preceding chapters, blacks found themselves sought out via training and recruitment efforts sponsored by mainstream advertising agencies. Consequently, the percentage of professional-level blacks working in several mainstream agencies more than doubled. Alongside the interest to increase the number of professional black employees, the second part of the Golden Age—blacks as agency owners—began. Black entrepreneurs turned their advertising expertise into an impressive number of successful advertising agencies.

Black advertising agencies took advantage of the pressure on corporate advertisers to devote at least part of company advertising budgets to targeting black consumers. Black adman Vince Cullers recalled in an interview,

Some of our clients came as a result of pressure placed on white companies to do business with the black community. Operation Breadbasket and the NAACP were instrumental in getting companies to understand that they needed to support black businesses. My first client, Lorillard of New York, came that way. Acquiring that account opened the door to other accounts for us.¹
As such opportunities expanded, the number of black agencies expanded between 1968 and 1975. Some important black agencies were founded prior to 1968, but black agency leaders found that their work was most sought after during the Golden Age.

In addition to the sociopolitical, economic, and advisory factors, there was another factor leading to increased opportunities for blacks to become agency owners. One factor scholars have not adequately accounted in the story of black agencies was the role played by the Creative Revolution. Like other agency entrepreneurs, blacks seized upon the opportunities existing in the industry in the mid and late 1960s and opened advertising agencies.

Unfortunately, the majority of the black-owned agencies closed before the end of the period. Still, existing records allow for the examination of some of the black agencies from the period. This chapter contains the analysis four black agencies that were founded and closed before the end of the Golden Age: Junius Edwards Advertising, Howard Sanders Advertising, John Small Advertising, and Zebra Associates. Even though these agencies did not exist more than a few years, their personnel made important contributions to the industry. Through the advertisements created both by the staffs of agencies that failed and those that survived, the representations of blacks in advertisements became more realistic and authentic.
Factors Behind the Golden Age

Scholars who have examined the advertising industry during the 1960s have credited the sociopolitical pressure generated by civil rights and government organizations with helping expand employment opportunities for blacks. The pressure led to training and recruitment programs that in turn led to the percentage increases discussed previously. Scholars have failed to note the impact that training programs had on the development of black-owned agencies. Most of the blacks who became agency owners obtained their industry experience as a result of working in mainstream agencies. In fact, some of those who became agency owners had come to the advertising industry as a result of training and recruitment programs.²

An additional factor in the emergence of black-owned agencies was the rising economic presence of black consumers. In 1969, market consultant D. Parke Gibson estimated the spending power of the black population at $30 billion dollars. There was no mistaking that, as blacks' educational and occupational levels grew, they made significant economic gains. Further, blacks had become a highly visible segment of America's major cities and markets. A desire to tap into this growing market helped lead to a demand for black advertising and marketing experts.³

How to tap the growing black consumer market, however, remained a question that many advertising practitioners found puzzling. As historian Robert Weems noted in his work, Desegregating the Dollar, the intense social changes going on among black Americans had "confused" advertisers. During the early
1960s, market consultants and some writers in the trade press informed advertisers that the way to reach African-American consumers was through advertisements depicting realistic integrated situations. Blacks, they reasoned, desired to assimilate into society and so advertisements should reflect that assimilation. "Negroes will de-emphasize race consciousness and differences, and focus attention on social and cultural similarities compatible with the concept and practice of an integrated society," predicted a writer for Sales Management. Yet, as Weems points out, the Watts riot of 1965 and the growing theme of black nationalism, as expressed by the slogan "Black Power," seemed to many in the advertising community a complete reversal of the theme of integration and assimilation. Consequently, advertisers looked for assistance to help fill their knowledge gap about how to speak effectively to black consumers. Emerging to fill that gap were African-American entrepreneurs who sought the opportunity to become agency owners. Aiding them in this effort was the acceptance of new, small, agencies that was part of the Creative Revolution.

In the mid- to late 1960s the professionals in the advertising industry created advertisements that sought to tap into the social changes occurring in the nation. In her work, Advertising in the 60s, historian Hazel Warlaumont noted, "For the first time, a premium was placed on innovation and imagination in advertising as many agencies moved away from the research and formulas of the past to rely more on the intuition and emotion so characteristic of the 60s." As agency staff members sought ways to appeal to the growing youth market, they infused the ads they created with a new style and creativity. Agency leaders focused on
designing ads that could sell products, but that also approached the consumer and product in an imaginative, eye-catching manner. Any agency leader who seemed to have a handle on how to speak to this younger generation found greater opportunities to gain client accounts. In his book, *The Mirror Makers*, historian Stephen Fox noted that creativity was “the fashion of the hour.” Agency staffers grew more daring in their advertisements and some of the traditional rules of the industry, such as the use of colors and copy, were disregarded. Assessing the state of the industry one agency executive noted, “This business has really gone crazy.” One result of the demands for increasingly different and unique types of ads, was that a plethora of new agencies opened, each striving to create “the next big thing.” In a single year nearly 100 new agencies entered the industry. Leaders of the large long-standing agencies found that their clients were now willing to move their accounts. Corporate advertising directors exhibited a distressing tendency to move accounts from agency to agency in an effort to create or maintain market leadership. For example, in a single week in 1969, over $64 million worth of billings switched agencies, a heretofore unimaginable transition in such a short time period. Past success was no guarantee of client allegiance as executives looked for the newest and freshest approaches. In the end it was staff members at traditional agencies who produced many of the most memorable ads from the period. Still, executives at large agencies had to share at least a portion of the spotlight for client attention with small agencies.
Among the new agency leaders clamoring for attention during the Creative Revolution, were a number of leaders of black-owned firms. Founding an agency was not a terribly difficult task. Gaining clients and maintaining one, however, was not an easy assignment for persons of any racial background. Agency failure rates were high and many agencies exited for only a few years. Still, within the tumultuous world of the advertising agency business, black agency leaders fought to develop a niche.\(^9\)

**Black-Owned Advertising Agencies That Perished**

In 1971, an article in *Black Enterprise*, a monthly devoted to the African-American business and economic development, listed 24 agencies that were owned by blacks. When compared to the total number of advertising agencies in the country this number may have seemed small to readers of the piece. But when juxtaposed against the fact that prior to 1965 there were only two full-service black agencies, Vince Cullers Advertising and Brandford Advertising, the growth was more impressive. Among the agencies founded during the Golden Age, some arrived on the scene with a great degree of fanfare and financing. Others came with only a short press release announcing that the firm existed and with outlines illustrating plans for growth. Black-owned agencies were located in all regions of the country primarily in urban areas with large black populations. But like mainstream advertising firms, the majority of black agencies were located in New York City.\(^{10}\)
Similar to leaders of other new agencies, black agency owners looked for a hook, something that they could use to differentiate their agency from others. Most black leaders chose for their sales hook the argument that their staff, unlike that of white-owned agencies, knew how to communicate with black consumers. In 1971, Eddie Arnold of Johnson Publishing argued that, "The most effective avenue to communicating with black people is other black people."^11 White agencies, some black executives suggested, lacked the personnel with the necessary social and cultural experience to reach blacks. Black adman Charles Sterling reasoned, "It's awfully hard for white people who have been white people all their lives to understand how black people think."^12 Without the use of black agencies, owners cautioned, companies faced the loss of sales due to advertising blunders. But with the appropriate counsel from black advertising agencies, the argument went, executives could not only avoid sales losses, but also experience large sales gains in the black consumer market.

In the late 1960s black agency owners found that many corporate executives accepted their arguments and sent a portion of their advertising budgets to black firms. Executives interested in reaching black consumers accepted the adage that, "There is an important place for the black advertising agency today, because, by thinking and speaking black, it can do the best job of communicating with black America."^13 Both corporate executives and black agency owners accepted that there were significant social and cultural differences between blacks and whites. Even though integration and assimilation were proceeding in the larger society, different marketing techniques were part of reaching the black
consumer market. Just as corporate executives had done in the early years of the Negro market, many welcomed the guidance that the personnel at black agencies provided to their product sales.

In addition to corporate executives interested in black consumers, many blacks who were involved or sought to enter the advertising industry welcomed black agencies. Speaking on the benefits of black agencies, one executive reasoned, "We can provide black creative talent with an outlet for their black experience, which is not true where blacks are working in white agencies, so black people often turn into white Negroes creating white commercials."\(^{14}\) Some blacks who worked in mainstream agencies forcefully echoed this sentiment: "We have to become black Anglo-Saxons to make it. If you let your hair grow out, you're Rap Brown. Speak out and you're coming on too strong. We're kind of house niggers."\(^{15}\) By contrast, "As a creative person in an African-American agency, you get a lot more respect. Right from the beginning you are considered to be a person of intelligence and certain capabilities. You have been hired and you don't have to prove yourself constantly. It's assumed that you know what you are doing," recalled a black ad executive.\(^{16}\) Many black agencies became the training grounds for blacks with little to no advertising experience. In addition, as black agencies grew in size, agency heads were able to recruit blacks from their positions in mainstream firms.

Because the personnel of most black agencies worked on accounts directed at black consumers, staff members viewed the firms' as places that gave them an opportunity to openly communicate their sense of black identity in their work.
Historian William Van Deburg termes this phenomenon “racial memory.” He argues that upwardly-mobile blacks, who had gained the accoutrements and professional standing to assimilate into mainstream society, continued to express aspects of African-American culture. Thus, while some in the advertising industry questioned “to what extent a black executive living in, say, Scarsdale is in touch with the black masses,” Van Deburg argues that adherence to facets of African-American culture crossed economic lines. He wrote, “While aspiring to the good life, they [blacks] remained wary of unabashedly embracing a culture whose values and practices long had denied their own humanity…. They agreed with their less well-to-do brothers and sisters that to equate the Afro-American with the Euro-American experience was ‘fraudulent behavior.” For many blacks in black-owned agencies this cultural embrace took the form of their being free to call upon their own backgrounds and experiences to create successful advertising. Instead of becoming “carbon copies of the Anglo-Saxon image of the adman,” as one black adman described, they were free to create their own visions of the African-American image of the adman or woman.

For most black agency personnel, however, the use of African-American images was secondary to their responsibility to create ads that aided product sales. In the early 1970s, a black advertising executive argued that black agency leaders could be divided into three types: First, were those who tried to compete with mainstream agencies by gaining accounts directed to the general market; second, were agency heads who positioned themselves as experts on speaking and selling to the black consumer market; third, were agency leaders who
claimed expertise on reaching low-income consumers regardless of color. In fact, most black agency owners combined elements of each of the three categories, varying their emphasis as was necessary to gain client accounts. Most black agencies were positioned as full-service firms able to handle all aspects of an advertising campaign from creation to media placement.¹⁹

Still, whether they sought to be so or not, black agency owners found that they were expected to be experts on reaching black consumers. Some black agency owners fought to avoid this label, but others welcomed it as an opportunity to gain client accounts. Opportunity, it seemed, was everywhere, and like other advertising entrepreneurs, blacks struggled to take advantage of it and leave their mark on the industry. One of the first blacks to attempt to seize existing opportunity, even before the start of the Golden Age, was Junius Edwards.

**Junius Edwards Advertising**

In 1965, Junius Edwards opened the advertising agency that bore his name in New York City. Edwards became interested in advertising work while he was in the military. He had won a series of slogan writing contests and upon discharge sought work in the advertising industry. After working as a copywriter for three mainstream agencies, he believed he had the experience needed to open his own agency.²⁰

In designing his agency, Edwards had a clear vision of what type of firm he wanted to run. He noted, “I’m not interested in selling black ads only. I don’t think there are enough billings in it. I’m interested in diversity. I want as many
different and interesting jobs as I can get." Moreover, "The only way to grow is to be a general advertising agency." Consequently, Edwards was selective in the types of accounts he solicited and accepted. He refused to accept "goody-goody" ads in which a client wanted to communicate an awareness of the black community. Rather than corporate public relations campaigns aimed at blacks, Edwards focused his agency on product sales.

Edwards opened his agency with a single client, Carver Federal Savings and Loan, a black-owned firm. He convinced company executives that it was in their best interest to expand their advertising campaign. Edwards reasoned that the firm needed advertisements not only in black-oriented media, but also in mainstream media such as the New York Times. He encouraged Carver executives to broaden their corporate vision to be inclusive of prospective clients throughout New York City, instead of simply in black areas. His efforts were credited as a success as accounts grew at Carver after Edwards implemented his advertising plans.

In addition to regional accounts like Carver Savings and Loan, Edwards also completed national advertising campaigns. He serviced accounts for clients such as Liggett and Myers (L&M), Accent Foods, and Fabergé. The majority of his work was in accounts directed at the black consumer market, but he also handled some general market advertising as well. In his advertisements Edwards presented non-stereotypical images of blacks that presented them as
an urban group in touch with life in their communities. And, Edwards’ linguistic choices illustrated his understanding of popular words and phrases of the period.25

An advertisement Edwards completed for Liggett and Myers cigarettes typified the way in which he used of aspects of black pride and phrases in vogue among blacks. The advertisement featured a young black couple who had just come from watching a “super bad” jazz performance. In the urban lexicon of the period the phrase “super bad” meant excellent. The text of the ad read: “That show was out-of-sight. You can still feel every note. They played hot and hard. They gave you the truth. And now you’re both ready for L&M.”26 Edwards sought to link L&M cigarettes with the couple and the show, both of which were presumably excellent. Also, within the linguistic and stylistic choices that Edwards made, he presented the couple as an authentic representation of black youth and physical attraction. The couple was arrayed in close proximity to one another but in a position that implied a sense of personal closeness rather that overt sexuality. Edwards completed similar advertising assignments for other clients in which he presented his vision of authentic black life.27

Despite his success in creating advertisements for both the black and general consumer markets, Edwards’ firm remained small. He was never able to employ more than eight persons, and, consequently he completed, much of the necessary work himself. By 1974, however, Edwards found that he was unable to maintain profitability at the agency and he closed his firm.28
Howard Sanders Advertising

One year after Edwards' firm opened, another black entrepreneur entered the agency business, Howard Sanders. Before opening an advertising agency Sanders worked as a salesman for a black radio station. While at the station he noted that he often had to make changes to advertisements submitted to the station to make them more effective with black listeners. He recalled, "I would often have to revise the entire advertising campaign written by the white agency because it was irrelevant to the black community." The continual need to rework advertisements and the effective results he generated convinced Sanders that he had the capacity to run his own advertising agency. Thus in 1966 he opened Howard Sanders Advertising.

Like many new agency owners, initially Sanders was unable to gain national-level client. But after existing on a series of local accounts, Sanders gained accounts for national-level campaigns and his firm grew quickly. Agency clients included Pepsi-Cola, Cutty Sark, Schlitz Malt Liquor, and Kraftco Foods. Primarily Sanders handled campaigns designed to generate product sales in the black consumer market. Unlike some other black agency owners, however, Sanders was willing to accept corporate public relations campaigns, as long as they were in some way connected with product sales. Many black executives shunned most forms of corporate public relations because they considered them to be short-lived projects that did little to aid the growth of their firm. In contrast, Sanders argued, "You can sell a product through a social action program."
Sanders believed that acceptance of corporate public relations campaigns offered him the opportunity to increase his agency billings and to show what his firm could do if given the opportunity.\textsuperscript{32}

Within many of his corporate public relations advertisements, Sanders sought to communicate his client's appreciation for the black community. For example, he created a series of ads for the R.J. Reynolds company that focused on blacks who worked for the firm. Reynolds executives recognized that the company's stature in the black community was somewhat low due to charges of discrimination within the company. Also, many Reynolds company products were not the leaders among black consumers as they were among white consumers. Therefore, they commissioned Edwards to initiate a campaign to handle both the communication of integration at the company and to generate product sales. The text of one ad Sanders created for the campaign read, "What's Franklin Weaver doing in our chemical plant if he's not there to sweep?" The text of the advertisement focused on the important role that Weaver and other blacks played at R.J. Reynolds. The advertisements also projected an image of R.J. Reynolds as a company that desired the patronage of black consumers, and that also desired black employees.\textsuperscript{33}

By 1972, Sanders' firm was recognized as the largest black-owned agency in the country. Along with opening the New York City headquarters, Sanders opened branch offices in Detroit and Philadelphia. Sanders had also taken on a public service role. In 1971, Sanders had organized a telethon that raised...
$300,000 to fight sickle-cell anemia, a disease prominent among African-Americans. In addition, Sanders diversified work of the agency into areas such as the sponsorship of television programs and movie promotions.\(^{34}\)

Yet despite the growth and success, Sanders was unable to sustain the momentum from the early 1970s. By 1976 Sanders had lost a number of client accounts and was forced to close his agency. The acceptance of corporate public relations accounts had enabled him to increase the size of his agency, but as other black executives had feared, when they ended his chances of his firm to continue the operation were doomed.\(^{35}\)

**John Small Advertising**

Three years after Howard Sanders entered the advertising agency business, another black man, one with more experience in the industry, opened an advertising firm. In 1969, John Small left his sales position at NBC Television to open an advertising agency. Prior to working at NBC, Small had been in the advertising industry as a media analyst and buyer at Grey Advertising. After examining the opportunities that were available in the advertising industry, Small decided to open an agency. He was financed in the venture with a $50,000 loan from the Small Business Administration. In addition, three other black men, all with experience as executives at mainstream agencies, joined him in the venture. A. Philip Fenty left his position at Ted Bates & Company to become Small's creative director; James Bell, who had been with J. Walter Thompson, became a
copywriter; Curt Young, formerly with Leo Burnett Advertising also worked as a copywriter at the firm. Hence Small's agency began with a level of industry experience and financing that few other black-owned firms had.  

Small argued that his agency was part of the “third generation” of blacks in the advertising industry. The first generation was comprised of blacks like Clarence Holte, Georg Olden, Roy Eaton, and others who had entered the industry as employees of mainstream agencies. The second generation included blacks who owned agencies, but who focused solely on marketing to black consumers. The third generation was made up of black-owned agency owners who competed with mainstream agency executives for accounts aimed at the general market. In 1970, he asserted, “Now the black man is ready to compete as an entrepreneur on the same basis as whites—on the sales his agency can generate on a national, rather than an ethnic basis.”  Small positioned his firm to become a general market agency, and he liked to refer to himself as “the black president of an agency, not the president of a black agency.” He reasoned, “No agency, if it is looking to the future, can grow substantially if it is only receiving ethnic accounts.” As a result, Small focused the bulk of his energies on soliciting accounts for the general market rather than the black consumer market. 

For almost nine months, Small did not acquire a single client. But in 1970 he landed what was then the largest single account held by any black-owned agency, advertising for the home entertainment products division of the Singer company. The campaign was to be directed to the general market, and it came with a budget in excess of $1 million. The J. Walter Thompson agency handled
advertising for other Singer products. But since the agency also controlled the advertising for RCA's electronic products, regulations prohibited the firm from doing the same for Singer. After the selection of Small's agency, Charles Manley, Singer's director of advertising, said the firm was chosen "not because of the blackness of the agency, but because of the potential greenness their efforts could produce for our company." Small echoed Manley's assessment, "We were given the account because of the merits of our understanding of the client's problem and the solutions we presented." Furthermore, Small predicted that the acquisition of the Singer account would lead to a "breakthrough" for other black agencies to handle large general market accounts.

Small's optimism on the prospects of black-owned agencies acquisition of general market accounts proved inaccurate for both other agencies and his own. The acquisition of the Singer account was not followed by other accounts with large advertising budgets. In addition, while Small actively sought to avoid the label of special markets agency, it became increasingly difficult for him to do so. When invited to address advertising and trade groups, Small found that it was most often on topics related to the black consumer market. Also, despite his efforts, much of the work that Small Advertising received in the mid-1970s was directed at the black consumer market. Small handled accounts for a number of different clients, including the Peace Corps and the Navy, but it was only for campaigns directed at blacks. In 1973, Small was assigned a segment of the Navy's recruitment advertising.
But the account was only for the Navy’s efforts among minorities. The bulk of the Navy’s advertising (approximately $20,000,000) was handled by a mainstream advertising firm.⁴⁴

By the end of 1973 Small estimated that his agency was billing nearly $14,000,000 annually.⁴⁵ The meteoric growth of the agency had led some to refer to the firm as the “pride of Madison Avenue.” But ironically Small’s rapid success helped lead to his eventual failure.⁴⁶

By early 1974 the growth of the agency forced Small to seek a number of bank loans to help meet expenses. Also, Small had began to soften his stance on emphasizing accounts that were directed at the general market. He began to refer to his agency as a “black” agency and actively sought accounts directed at black consumers. Yet despite his willingness to broaden his account base further into special marketing, Small was increasingly unable to acquire new accounts. Furthermore, the accounts that he did have began to be moved to other agencies. Because of his reputation and past work, loan officers granted Small waivers on his mounting loan defaults. But when Small proved unable to service adequately the Navy account, the account was moved to another agency. As a result bank officers refused continue their lenient policies and his loans were called in. Out of operating capital and deeply in corporate and personal dept, in 1975 Small declared bankruptcy and closed his agency.⁴⁷
The same year that Small entered the agency field, another black-owned firm was founded in New York City. And out of all of the black agencies founded during the Golden Age, Zebra Associates seemed the one most likely to succeed. Raymond League, formerly an account executive at J. Walter Thompson, and Joan Murray, a former television newswoman, founded the firm. League worked at the Thompson agency for six years achieving the level of account executive. But, he recalled, "I was going to hit a ceiling soon. Although they treated me well, I knew I was not about to become a vice-president." As a result, he looked for the chance to ply his knowledge and expertise as owner of his own agency. In 1969 the opportunity he sought presented itself, and he and Murray formed Zebra Associates.

Founded with $250,000 in financial support, League and Murray had three clients already in hand when the firm opened. Also, for a new agency, the firm had a sizable staff—10 persons. The agency staff was integrated and League liked to refer to the agency as the first "totally integrated national advertising agency with black principles." Still, it is unclear whether the Zebra staff was integrated by accident or by design. After starting the agency League reflected, "There were not enough black people around with the experience to do the work that had to be done. And the blacks with experience didn't want to leave their fat white jobs." Consequently League was forced to seek out persons with the requisite experience. This included a number of white persons. But it is unclear whether he did so out of a desire to have an integrated staff or because he could
not find enough blacks with the experience he required. Yet regardless of how it happened, the fact that Zebra was an integrated agency drew a considerable amount of attention. Articles in both the trade and popular press featured the agency and the staff, and the firm quickly became recognized as one of the leading black agencies in the nation.\textsuperscript{52}

Alongside the mission to acquire client accounts and produce advertising, League and Murray also positioned Zebra for three community-focused purposes. First, the agency was set up to contribute to the growth of a black presence in the advertising industry. From the beginning, the agency had a training program for blacks and Puerto Ricans. The Zebra training program was envisioned as being different from the minority training programs developed in mainstream agencies. League argued that most of the agency-sponsored training programs were “big farces” that did little to improve blacks’ position in the industry: “They bring in blacks who have no potential, and once they’ve got them, they don’t know what to do with them. On the other hand, companies hire ‘someone with potential.’ They give him a good job and a good salary, but they don’t give him any training.”\textsuperscript{53} By contrast, Zebra’s training program was designed to attract talented people and to give them rigorous training and an education in advertising techniques. The agency opened with one trainee already on staff with plans to acquire several others. Moreover, in addition to the training program, League and Murray planned to have Zebra staff members locate trainees for other agencies. An employment consultant was retained to help find additional trainees and to prepare training programs. Trainees were
paired with an experienced member of the staff, and given increased responsibilities as soon as they were deemed ready. League reasoned, “When we’re done with them we want them to know more about the business than we do.” The program was designed to prepare trainees for professional-level work rather than secretarial or clerical duties.

Second, League and Murray sought to use the resources available to Zebra to help improve the status of the black media. Shortly after opening the agency, Zebra staff members prepared a paper that described the sales efficiency of black newspapers. Zebra executives believed that advertisers did not adequately understand the sales potential of the black press, and they placed advertising with black newspapers only as a last option. League and Murray hoped that a careful and detailed analysis of the black press would help black newspapers and magazines attract advertising dollars.

Third, Zebra executives devoted a portion of their time to help minority-owned businesses attract more clients through better advertising. One of the three accounts Zebra had when it opened was for a black-owned clothing store. A Zebra press release, which quoted League, detailed the goals and early results of the small business program:

Our first such account is Le Mans, a men’s clothing store located at 715 Amsterdam Avenue, New York City. We recently completed a Father’s Day promotion for the store, and the results were highly successful. Frankly, we expected it.... Not only do we feel this is part of our responsibility to the community, but we believe that our staff benefits greatly from continuous first-hand experience in the heart of minority markets.
League and Murray believed that many minority business owners lacked the knowledge of and budget for adequate advertising campaigns. Therefore, rather than charging their full fees, they lent their services to minority business owners at cost. Also, as Weems surmises, the small business program confirmed that Zebra “sought to become a truly socially responsible company.”

Like some other black agency executives, League and Murray sought to present the Zebra staff as experts on the black consumer market. Murray argued, “It’s hard for a white adman to find out even simple things, like the language people speak in Harlem. I can change from a Pucci miniskirt to dungarees and a sweatshirt and learn from my friends in the ghetto without problems.” This knowledge gap caused mainstream advertising to be ignored in the new black consumer market. The new black consumer, League and Murray argued, wanted to be courted with advertising appeals that spoke to them in what they considered to be an authentic and respectful manner. Advertising prepared by mainstream agency staff members approached blacks as if they were simply the same as white consumers. The text of an advertisement for the firm read: “Mass advertising is color-blind. It approaches the Black consumer as if he were somebody’s fair haired boy. It offers him great white hopes.” To drive home the point the ad was illustrated with a photograph of a black man with white greasepaint on his face.

Yet blacks were not the only consumer group on which League and Murray claimed expertise. The pair also presented the Zebra staff as an authority on low-income consumers regardless of race or color. League and Murray argued
that Zebra's target market was "the inner city dweller with an income of less than $5,000 per year." The low-income market, they calculated, controlled an annual income approaching $1 billion. Moreover, this was a market that was not being properly tapped by corporate America. The reason: advertising agencies did not speak the right language—"inner-city." In an agency promotional pamphlet League argued, "To be understood in the low-income market, you've got to speak inner-city. And you've got to speak it fluently. One poorly chosen subject, one wrong predicate can sentence a whole campaign to Nowheresville." 62

Instead of dooming a campaign to "Nowheresville," League and Murray argued that they knew how to speak to low-income consumers. Hence advertisements completed by Zebra staff members used phrases such as "Good-lookin' don't shout. Go 'head on. Tell me 'bout it." 63 Staffers were confident that this type of language would resonate effectively with low-income consumers because it reached them on a level that they appreciated. The result, League argued, would be increased sales for the product in question. 64

Although account acquisition came slowly, by the end of the second year in business Zebra was billing over $2.5 million annually. The agency handled both regional and national accounts for clients such as Coca-Cola, Clairol, Spectrum Cosmetics, the Peace Corps, and Schenley Industries. Zebra staff members also acted as project consultants to mainstream agencies with campaigns in the black consumer market. In addition, the firm handled public service advertisements for black organizations such as the National Urban League. League and Murray, both of whom often appeared at advertising conventions
speaking on topics related to black and low-income consumers, maintained the public image of the firm. Articles about the agency were published in the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and *Time* that further contributed to the agency's public profile. So, at least publicly, Zebra Associates appeared to be developing into a successful agency. But in fact all was not well within the agency.⁶⁵

The first evidence of problems within Zebra came near the end of 1971. Although in terms of billings the agency was doing well, Caroline Jones, a black creative director, resigned from the agency. Jones had been with the agency since it was founded and was well regarded within the advertising industry. She had represented the agency on a number of trade panels, expanded the creative department from two to ten persons, conducted training programs, and lectured on black consumers. Publicly the Jones resignation was presented as an instance of an employee moving to a higher level position with another agency. Privately, however, Jones' resignation indicated that there were serious problems within the agency. First, in her resignation letter, Jones argued that there had been a serious decline in the working standards of the creative department. Second, in a personal notebook, Jones implied that there were problems with racial discrimination in the agency. She wrote, "I have always fought against racist policy when it applied to blacks, and my conscience will not allow me to ignore the reverse practice within the Zebra family." Jones indicated that she had witnessed instances in which white staff members were prevented from openly working on accounts for black-owned companies. Also, there had been instances in which white staff members were not allowed to work on campaigns...
directed at black consumers. Furthermore, these instances were well known within the agency, and there was no management effort to curb the practice. Therefore, rather than continue in an uncomfortable position, Jones chose to leave the agency for a position at Kenyon and Eckhardt. Jones’s departure left a creative and administrative void, but the firm lost no due to her resignation. Yet following Jones’s resignation, evidence of serious problems at the executive level also emerged.67

The beginning of the end of Zebra Associates came in early 1973. Citing reasons of ill health, the agency board and stockholders requested League’s resignation as chairman and president. The stated reasons behind League’s departure appeared curious when he accepted an executive position with another agency one month after leaving Zebra. Bill Castleberry, formerly a senior account executive at Young & Rubicam, took over after League’s departure. After Castleberry accepted the position, Murray enthused, “I am absolutely delighted that a man of Bill Castleberry’s caliber and integrity is moving into this position. I am sure that his 17-year experience in the industry will provide added strength in leading the agency to future growth.”68 But despite Castleberry’s experience and Murray’s optimism, the financial future of the agency was already in doubt. When Castleberry took over the position, the agency had debts in excess of $500,000. In addition, the working relationship between League and Murray quickly deteriorated.69
In the wake of League’s resignation no accounts were lost at Zebra Associates. In fact, under Castleberry’s direction the agency experienced further account acquisitions and increased billings. In early 1975, the agency was listed as the number one black-owned agency in the nation, with billings in excess of $4 million per year. Sizing up the dismal economic state of some other black agencies, Castleberry confidently stated, “Downturn in the economy? Not here!” He went on to predict that within a year Zebra billings would crest $5 million. Although agency billings did increase in 1975, the firm was heavily in debt from which it would not recover.

During his short tenure as the head of Zebra Associates, Castleberry had reduced the debt load of the agency from $500,000 to $175,000. But the failure of John Small Advertising at the end of 1975 placed a strain on many black-owned agencies. After Small’s failure, Zebra clients refused to extend Castleberry more time to restructure the debts of the agency. As a result, in 1976, Zebra Associates was closed. Still, the story of Zebra Associates did not end with the closure of the firm. Instead, the animosity between Murray and Castleberry led to one of the most bizarre stories of the year.

After the closure of Zebra Associates, Murray openly blamed Castleberry for the demise of the firm. She argued that the “business and financial practices of the agency president” hampered the growth of the agency. Moreover, “By the time the true state of the company’s financial condition was known by the directors and investors it was too late to salvage the agency...either by management change or additional capital infusion.” Privately Murray also
accused Castleberry of stealing money from the agency. A few weeks after the closure of Zebra, Murray’s frustration nearly turned into physical violence. In a story more reminiscent of the blaxploitation films of the era than of legitimate business enterprise, Murray allegedly hired two men (one a “karate expert”) to assault Castleberry and throw his body from a window. The plot unraveled after, instead of killing Castleberry, the two men tried to extort money from him and were captured by the police. As a result Murray was charged with conspiring to have Castleberry killed. She later pled guilty to a lesser charge in exchange for having the conspiracy charge dismissed. Unhurt, Castleberry founded his own agency, and Murray never worked in the advertising industry again.74

**Behind The Failure of Black-Owned Agencies**

Despite the sensational story following the end of Zebra Associates, black-owned agencies did not fail as a result of executives’ conspiring to have one another killed. Instead, black agencies faced a host of difficulties that most were not able to overcome. Many of their problems were common to many new advertising agencies in the late 1960s and early 1970s—declining revenue, inability to repay loans, and difficulty in maintaining a client base. In the early and mid 1970s the economic downturn took many casualties in the advertising industry, white and black. Yet there were also additional problems specific to the black-owned agency segment.75

Executives at many black-owned agencies found that they were primarily confined to a specific market niche—the black consumer market. Ironically this niche was both sustaining their companies and at the same time limiting agency
growth. Many agencies had came into existence based on the ability of the agency staff to speak to the black and low-income consumer markets. Unfortunately, the accompanying argument was that the personnel at black agencies lacked the ability to speak to the general market. Fox notes, "As long as black agencies and blacks working at white agencies argued that only blacks could understand and sell to their fellow blacks, then white accounts could reasonably pass them by." As advertising billings constricted in the early 1970s, the first campaigns to be eliminated often were those that were directed toward the black consumer market. As one reporter observed, "Corporate advertisers, now that the gun is no longer at their heads, are not exactly beating the doors down to buy specialized services." With the economic climate deteriorating and the pressure from civil rights groups and the government waning, many corporate executives ceased their campaigns to the black consumer market and use of black agencies.

Still, many black advertising executives had sought to break out of the black consumer market niche but were unable to do so. Some executives argued that their difficulties were linked to the "ghettoization" of black-owned agencies. In 1978, a black ad executive argued, "You can't survive on ethnic business, and yet they won't accept you on your merits as an advertising agency." Without the viable option of competing for general market accounts, many owners of black agencies were forced into an untenable position. Black agencies, they reasoned, whether they sought to be so or not, were labeled as being useful only for accounts to be directed at blacks. This hampered the ability of black agency
leaders to gain accounts for the general market because when they sought such accounts they were assumed to be outside their area of expertise. An additional byproduct of this confinement was that black agency leaders ended up competing against each other for available targeted campaigns.\textsuperscript{80}

In addition, the types of accounts that some black agencies acquired limited the growth opportunities. Weems argues that many of the accounts black agencies obtained were a form of “corporate reparations” or public relations accounts from companies looking to improve their image among minorities. A black advertising executive who called the accounts that many black agencies obtained “tokenism” echoed his point. Black executives and agency heads sometimes found that the source of the selection of their agency was a corporate affirmative action committee rather than an advertising director. Consequently some black-owned agencies were chosen for the racial hue of the personnel, rather than their potential contribution to an advertising campaign. Although these campaigns helped black agencies “pay the bills” they were not the types of accounts that led to sustained growth. A black executive observed, “On a long-range basis, you can’t build a business on the white man’s guilt.”\textsuperscript{81} When the recession began in the early 1970s, the reparations and public relations programs were eliminated and agencies like Howard Sanders’ followed shortly thereafter.\textsuperscript{82}

Black agency growth was also limited by change in federal laws that impacted both black agencies that perished and those that did not. In 1971, cigarette advertisements were prohibited from being broadcast on radio. Cigarette
company executives had been one of the groups most interested in reaching black consumers. As a result, tobacco billings were an important portion of the bottom line for many black agencies. The prohibition on cigarette advertisements led to a sizable decrease in the billings coming from tobacco companies and hampered black agencies. League noted, "The accounts we thought we would get, we didn't get." 83

The low number of blacks who had advertising experience also hindered the growth of black-owned agencies. Executives found that they had to spend considerable time and financial resources to train black professionals. Moreover, once blacks had been trained and gained a measure of experience, there was immediate competition for their services from black and white-owned agencies. As the training and recruitment programs disappeared, many white-owned agencies drew their black personnel from black-owned agencies. Agency decision makers like those at Young & Rubicam started ethnic cells, and as GAP members had charged in the late 1960s, they siphoned off black agency personnel to staff their departments (see Chapter 5).

But the movement of persons from small to large agencies was a customary part of personnel development in the industry. Small agencies gave individuals the chance to gain the skill and experience needed to enhance their employment prospects. Yet with few blacks available to be hired, let alone with some experience, the process proved disastrous for many black agencies. An industry
observer noted, "It would appear that 'white-owned' agencies, at least unwittingly, helped stifle the growth of black-owned shops by luring and keeping top black talent with salaries few shops can meet."^84

Some black advertising executives also blamed the members of the trade press for having a hand in the demise of black agencies. Executives argued that reporters failed to cover any of the advertising campaigns or the activities of black advertising personnel. Especially singled out by agency owners was the coverage of Advertising Age, the newspaper of the advertising industry. In 1976, black adman Byron Lewis wrote, "Black agencies do not seem to get much attention from Advertising Age except when adversity strikes or an agency collapses."^85 This was a serious charge because the trade press was read not only by agency executives, but also by corporate advertising directors who decided what agencies would be selected for advertising work. Also, the omission of coverage was a far cry, from the articles and editorials of the 1940s and 50s that had lauded the importance of having the appropriate counsel to reach black consumers.\(^86\) The lack of positive coverage, leaders argued, led a "credibility problem." People were left with the dangerous impression that all black agencies either did substandard work or were highly unstable, black executives contended. Executives pressed reporters to cover both the successes and the failures of black agencies. Speaking on behalf of black agency owners, Lewis concluded, "We believe Advertising Age could render a significant service by providing more frequent coverage of positive business
activities in the minority advertising and marketing sector.®® Balanced coverage would allow black agencies to have the same chances for success as other agencies throughout the industry.®®

**Conclusion**

Like other advertising entrepreneurs, blacks took advantage of the social and political conditions in the 1960s and 70s to establish advertising agencies. By the early 1970s there were over twenty black-owned agencies in the nation. Yet within a few years of origination, most had vanished from the industry. Still, while in existence black-owned agencies, especially when directing advertisements to black consumers helped to depict a more authentic and realistic picture of black Americans. Black agency owners recognized that part of their responsibility was to help rehabilitate blacks' image. Many campaigns created by the heads of black agencies were able to do just that while at the same time contributing to product sales.

Still, not all black-owned agencies were doomed to failure. In fact, some were able to survive the economic downturn of the early 1970s and, eventually, to flourish. Four of the most successful such agencies are the topic of the next chapter.
Notes


6 Hazel G. Warlaumont, Advertising in the 60s: Turncoats, Traditionalists, and Waste Makers in America’s Turbulent Decade (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2001), 77.


8 Fox, 265-271; Warlaumont, 170-172.

9 Tom Burrell, interview with author, January 26, 2001, Chicago, Illinois. There are no existing statistics regarding the failure rate of new agencies. The opinion of those in the industry and among some industry observers, however, is that many new agencies are in existence fewer than five to seven years.


12 Ibid., 170.


Quoted in Woods, 124.


Ibid., 87; "Four A's Studies 'Minority Gap' in Employment, 87. Tom Burrell, interview by author.

"Black Image Makers on Madison Avenue," 17.


Anderson, 11.

Ibid.


"L&M Cigarettes Pitched to Blacks as 'Super Bad'," Advertising Age (August 2, 1971): 20.


"Black Image Makers on Madison Avenue," 17.


"Grey Skies for Black Admen," 82.

Ibid.

Ibid.

35 "Black Ad Agencies...And Then There Were 13," *Black Enterprise* (September 1979): 44-45.

36 "Grey Skies for Black Admen," 81.


40 "Small Sees Singer Assignment as Breakthrough for Blacks," 137.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.


45 Some members of the trade press, who placed Small’s billings closer to $7,000,000 per year, disputed his estimates.

46 "Singer Move to Grey Shows JWT is Still Having Problems," 1, 97; "Navy Picks Black Shop, 2, 188.


48 Anderson, 11.


50 "Zebra Associates: Why We Are... What We Are... Who We Are," company promotional pamphlet, Caroline Jones Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

51 Anderson, 11.


53 "Whites Fail to Aid Minorities: Don’t Speak 'Inner City,' League Charges," *Advertising Age* (June 30, 1969): 93.

54 Ibid.


57 "Zebra Agency Offers Top Talents to Small Black Advertisers," company press release, Caroline Jones Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

58 Weems, 78.

59 "Grey Skies for Black Admen," 82.


61 Ibid.; "Zebra Associates: Why We Are... What We Are... Who We Are", 3.

62 "Zebra Associates: Why We Are...What We Are...Who We Are," 3.

63 "The Black Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, 76.

64 "Zebra Associates: Why We Are...What We Are...Who We Are," 1-4.


Fox, 321; Warlaumont, 172-174.

"Black Ad Agencies...And Then There Were 13," 44.

Weems, 98.


Donath, "Black-Owned Shops Still Seeking Identity," 96; Tom Burrell, interview by author.

Donath, 3.


"Grey Skies for Black Admen," 81.


On the trade press and coverage of the Negro market see Chapters 1 and 2.


CHAPTER 8 – 1968-1975

Part II – Black-Owned Advertising Agencies: Those That Survived

By the mid-1970s, the number of black-owned agencies had declined significantly. A reporter surmised, “It is apparent now that the years of struggle to develop a solid cadre of black-owned and operated advertising agencies in New York City has failed.” But had the reporter extended his vision further west, he would have noted that the black-owned agency segment was far from dead. In Chicago, three black agencies helped lead the industry to a higher appreciation of the work such agencies could perform. A fourth agency, in New York City, aided in that effort and grew to become the largest black agency ever. Moreover, the personnel of each of these agencies made significant contributions to the development of advertising to the black consumer market. In addition, their work helped illustrate to industry observers that blacks could maintain successful agency operations.

Vince Cullers Advertising and the Soul Market

Vince Cullers founded his advertising agency in 1956. It was not until the Golden Age, however, that he found an appreciable demand for his services. Until the Golden Age, Cullers’ agency had existed modestly off of a variety of local, regional, and some national accounts. But as the social and political
changes mounted in the United States in the late 1960s, he found himself labeled as the leading person to communicate with a segment of black America. After creating a series of advertisements for a cigarette company, Cullers became known as having the capacity to “speak Soul.” Through his work in the Soul market, Cullers tapped into and communicated an understanding of the changes taking place in the black community and helped create a niche within a niche—Soul marketing—in which his agency was the recognized leader.²

In 1969 a writer for Sales Management proclaimed Soul marketing as “The biggest, most dynamic thing in today’s Negro Market.”³ The article also contained an excerpt from a Soul dictionary to inform interested advertisers of the words currently in vogue:

- **Boss** — The ultimate in compliments
- **Burn** — To improvise superlatively, in music or in life.
- **Dap** — Impeccable dressed.
- **Fox** — A beautiful woman
- **Gig** — A job. Synonyms are “slave” and “hustle.”
- **Hog** — A very large automobile.
- **Jive** — A persuasive talker.⁴

Advertisers were cautioned, however, not to use the words without the advice of a knowledgeable black consultant lest they be used in the wrong context.⁵

The Soul market cut across a variety of areas: food, music, theater, movies, clothing, social activities, and advertisements. Soul food restaurants began popping up in major urban centers, and publisher rushed to produce Soul food cookbooks. In terms of a contemporary definition Soul was described as “feeling.” Van Deburg explains:
Soul was the folk equivalent of the black aesthetic. It was perceived as being the essence of the separate black culture. If there was beauty and emotion in blackness, soul made it so. If there was a black American mystique, soul provided much of its aura of sly confidence and assumed superiority. Soul was sass—a type of primal spiritual energy and passionate joy available only to members of the exclusive racial confraternity. It was a ‘tribal thing,’ the emotional medium of a subculture.  

In terms of advertisements it was something that conveyed to blacks a sense that they were special and that their patronage was welcome. Advertisers were encouraged, “Check your brands to see if they are soul satisfying [emphasis in original].” The text of an Ebony advertisement concluded, “You can’t really define ‘soul.’ But when it’s there, you know it. In an ad it’s the difference between saying, ‘My product is for everybody.’ Or, ‘My product is for you!’”  

Soul marketing was also evidence of the segmentation of the black consumer market that was led by black ad professionals like Cullers. Hence Soul was not applicable to every person, but was something that primarily appealed to younger blacks. Also, Soul was presented as something that reached across racial lines and appealed to young whites. One writer noted, “Since black is a feeling, not a color, many other areas are open for new product expansion. White girls should not be neglected either. They are just as receptive to the black feeling as Negroes.” Black advertising executives and members of the trade press cautioned that advertisers that seeking to appeal to the entire black consumer market with a Soul theme would result in many blacks being alienated from the products. Instead, Cullers and other black executives advised clients that there was a multiplicity of images and messages that were effective in different segments of the black community. Hence the
advertisements developed in the early 1960s presented scenes of integration that were still accepted by segments of the black community. Soul was not a replacement of those images; instead it was presented as something to appeal to a different market segment.¹⁰

Cullers argued that his single goal was to be a good black agency and that he was not interested in accounts for the general market. Rather he sought accounts directed at black consumers through which he could present positive images of blacks. In 1966, activist Stokely Carmichael argued, "We have to stop being ashamed of being black. A broad nose, a thick lip and nappy hair is us and we are going to call that beautiful whether they like it or not."¹¹ Many of the advertisements Cullers created in the late 1960s and early 1970s presented a visual representation of Carmichael's argument. Some of Cullers most telling advertisements were for products made for blacks and placed in media that catered to black consumers. One of his more famous ad series was for Afro Sheen products. One advertisement featured a photograph of a group of black people of various ages and skin tones. Copy for the ad read: "A beautiful new product for a beautiful new people."¹² Cullers' vision of Soul marketing implied a rejection of the idea that black was "ugly," but, instead it played on the theme that "black is beautiful." Consequently Cullers' advertisements featured blacks of varying skin tones, from the very light to the very dark. His use of blacks who were identifiable as blacks with clearly Negroid features was a reversal from the traditional use of models who were "Caucasian-looking" or of blacks who had been "camouflaged white."¹³ Other advertisements in the series featured family
images, or pictures of black fathers with their sons and many included copy written in Swahili. Cullers' goal through the ads was to sell products, but also to encourage blacks to accept their hair in its natural state and to identify with Africa.14

In his advertisements, Cullers endeavored to tap into the developing sense of pride among blacks. He presented blacks as an urban group and as a people who had a sense of their history and African heritage. Afros, dashikis, and other forms of African clothing, language, and scenes that conveyed an understanding of black militancy were part of the Cullers tradition. A radio advertisement for Newport cigarettes illustrates the theme. A person read the ad copy with an "unmistakably black voice" over sounds of a "black-militant rally." The voice said, "Brothers, you've been hand-picked as the boldest brothers in the country." The task? To sample Newport cigarettes in order to test their degree of Soul. After various black men sampled the cigarettes each one proclaimed the quality product and voiced plans to switch brands. The ad concluded, "Back to your cities, brothers. Put out the word to every bold soul."15 Another print advertisement for the cigarette became known as "The Brother in the Blue Dashiki" and was Cullers most recognized ad for the period. The ad featured a bearded black man, crowned with a large Afro. He was wearing a blue dashiki with beads around his neck that were visible through an opening that also displayed his bare chest. Copy for the ad read, "Bold, Cold Newport...A whole new bag of menthol smoking."
Cullers tapped into the linguistic and visual representations of what he viewed as the new black man. The new black man was someone who was proud and aware of his heritage—one who reached for a bold cigarette like Newports'.

Soul in advertising was an effort to tap into the language and imagery that were popular in the period. While some activists, such as Huey P. Newton, considered any participation of blacks in advertising a sort of commodification of blackness, Soul was a part of the liberation movement. Newton argued, “If you want to be ‘black and proud,’ they put Negroes in advertising campaigns and have all the Negroes fighting for the right to drink Coke rather than Pepsi.” It is undeniable that, as Newton surmised, Soul was a marketing tool that was used to sell products. Yet Soul was also an effort to demonstrate and communicate black pride in the context of marketing. Cullers and others tapped into a sense of black consciousness, history, pride, and African identification that were part of the current of the period. Therefore, while Newports were certainly “bold” and “cold,” the people who used them were presented as part of the effort to uplift black people.

Soul was also an attempt to turn negatives into positives. Cullers argued, “In the ads, we were able to portray pride, family, and heritage at a time when black people were beginning to recognize who they were. [Advertising] campaigns...crystallized that image and provided black people with a reflection of themselves.” Soul marketing was part of what scholar Jannette Dates identified as the “defiant response” of black image makers in the media producing industries. Soul advertising allowed blacks in the industry to
contribute their vision of authentic black liberation. It was similar to the utilitarian uses of advertising sought by civil rights activists in the early 1960s. Whereas activists had sought to use advertising to educate the country on blacks’ contributions and in support of integration, Cullers and others sought to use it as a tool for uplift and pride. He recalled in an interview:

All this was not only part of how we felt about ourselves...but the ads reinforced what Black people were really trying to do in those days. That was a beautiful time to me....It seemed as though blacks were really trying to come together...in a way that made them say, we are somebody...and relating to each other in a healthy way. We were kind of spearheading that...it was kind of an interesting, beautiful kind of period.20

Further, Van Deburg notes, “Each individual who desired to cultivate the black Muse could become a creator of culture in support of liberation.”21 While not all blacks’ in the industry sought this position, those who did effectively expressed their support through their work.

Vince Cullers Advertising was the leading agency for the Soul market. Although the firm expanded in size during the Golden Age, other black agencies surpassed it in growth and billings. Cullers handled products for a variety of clients, but his resolute stance on not actively seeking accounts for the general market limited the growth of his agency. Nevertheless, because of his long years in the industry, Cullers became known as the “Dean” of blacks in the advertising industry.22

UniWorld Advertising

Like Vince Cullers, UniWorld founder Byron Lewis came to the advertising agency business with little prior agency experience. In 1953, he graduated from Long Island University with a degree in journalism but was unable to find work in
any mainstream newspaper. Consequently he joined a black newspaper as an advertising space salesman. But it was his experience with helping to create a literary magazine, *Urbanite*, that ultimately led to his interest in the agency business. *Urbanite* was designed to appeal to black readers who sought to read the works of the leading black authors of the time. Yet despite an impressive list of contributors, including James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, and Lorraine Hansberry, low advertising revenues forced publishers to cease publication of the magazine after only a few issues. The experience, however, led Lewis to want to learn more about the revenue-producing area of the media—advertising. He worked as an advertising manager for Amalgamated Publishers, a representative for black newspapers, for a little over a year. In 1969, after gaining additional experience working at *Tuesday*, the newspaper supplement owned by Leonard Evans, Lewis started his agency. He named the agency UniWorld to communicate his vision that the firm might become active in a diversity of markets and geographical locations. He stated, “At that time I deduced that there was a need for a vehicle for advertisers to market and develop ads for the minority market. My concept was to create a full service agency to do just that.”

Similar to the financial status of the founders of Zebra Associates, Lewis opened UniWorld with $250,000 worth of financing from venture capital groups. Based in New York City, Lewis had a staff of five employees but few accounts. The accounts that he did have he had gained through the contacts he had made as an advertising salesman. Still, Lewis focused his efforts on ensuring that UniWorld was the leader in a particular advertising niche—the black consumer.
market. He noted, "Our job is to direct a client to an understanding of his product's stand in the black marketplace." In addition, he sought to develop UniWorld into a diversified agency, to handle more than the advertising of consumer products.

In 1971, Lewis' interest in diversification began to show impressive results. UniWorld was named as the first black agency to handle the promotion and advertising work for a major motion picture—Shaft. The movie, an action thriller about a black private investigator in Harlem, was one of many produced during the blaxploitation era of the 1970s. Movie posters created by UniWorld staff members depicted the lead character stylishly dressed and firing a pistol as he clung to a rope with his other hand. The picture and posters appealed to black audiences who enjoyed the depiction of a black hero who told whites exactly what he thought and felt. Also, the radio advertisements for the film illustrated staff members' understanding of black humor and language. An announcer on the ads boomed, "If you want to see Shaft, ask your momma." The line made reference to the adult nature of the film but also tapped into aspects of traditional black humor such as "playing the dozens," or the verbal jousts popular in the black community of which "momma" jokes were a part. Referring to the radio ads, a UniWorld staff member remarked, "We understand our sense of humor and whites never will." The film and the accompanying advertisements were a hit with black audiences. The movie was a financial success, grossing over $12,000,000, a figure significantly higher than the cost to produce. The success of Shaft illustrated the financial possibilities in the black-oriented movie market,
and the efficacy of a black agency in movie promotion. The success of the film also prompted two sequels for which UniWorld handled the advertising and promotion.\textsuperscript{26}

In terms of product advertisements, Lewis' client base contained a number of blue-chip firms including Eastman Kodak, Ford Motors, AT&T, and Kraft Foods. Many of the accounts came to the agency as a result of Lewis' reputation and creative work, but some also came as the result of pressure from civil rights groups. One such account was Avon cosmetics. Like other agencies, although the account came as a result of external pressure, the successful advertisements Lewis created led to the firm becoming a long-standing client.\textsuperscript{27}

In the early 1970s, the People United to Save Humanity (PUSH), led by Jesse Jackson, secured a series of agreements from corporate executives. One of the items each company executive agreed to was to place more advertisements in black-owned media and to send more advertising work to black-owned advertising agencies. In 1974, leaders of one of the companies in question, Avon, turned to UniWorld to meet their commitment to the PUSH agreement. Avon executives approached UniWorld executives to create advertisements to reach the youth and African-American beauty products market. Company executives wanted to alter the traditional image of the Avon lady and reach out to consumers who considered the Avon lady something from their mothers' generation. Lewis and other UniWorld staffers created a series of print and radio advertisements that utilized the language in vogue at the time. Advertisements spoke of how Avon now had "hip shades" and how the new Avon lady "had it
together.” Also, the advertisements indicated that Avon wanted black women to join the company and that firm welcomed the patronage of black consumers. Lewis also recruited the winners of the annual Miss Black America pageant in a variety of sales promotions. Avon executives also created a product line called “Shades of Beauty,” specifically directed at the black consumer market.²⁸

In addition to product advertising and movie promotions, UniWorld handled promotions for tourism and created some political advertisements. UniWorld was the first black-owned agency to provide consulting for black political candidates. Agency staff members participated in the successful campaigns of Mayor Kenneth Gibson of Newark, New Jersey, and Mayor Richard Hatcher of Gary, Indiana. Lewis also added a regional office in Washington, D.C., to attempt to access government research and advertising accounts. His long-range goal was to expand UniWorld to the point that he could compete on an equal basis with executives from mainstream agencies. After becoming the leading agency in the black consumer market Lewis planned to go after more accounts for the general market. He noted, “We feel that the black thing—ethnic advertising—is only the beginning.”²⁹

Although the agency continually acquired clients, billings were not enough to sustain expenses. As a result, in 1974 Lewis ran out of money to run the agency. Fortunately he came up with a concept that ultimately helped to save his agency from financial ruin. Returning to a technique popular in the 1930s and 1940s, Lewis created a successful radio soap opera aimed at black listeners. The program, “Sounds of the City,” was 15 minutes long and was syndicated to
radio stations around the country. Lewis called the program a "creative hustle," because the show gave him a sales vehicle to sell to a prospective client who had no prior interest in his services. Executives at Quaker Oats sponsored the program that helped to generate Lewis' first million dollars worth of gross sales. Also, the soap opera provided Lewis a solid financial foundation on which to grow the agency.\textsuperscript{30}

By the end of 1975, UniWorld was the only-black-owned agency still in operation in New York City. Lewis had successfully maneuvered the agency through the various problems that had doomed other black agencies. Although the economic crisis of the early 1970s certainly limited the growth of the firm for a period of time, the Lewis was not forced to close the agency. He diversified his agency beyond product advertisements and had gained some small advertising campaigns for the general market. Lewis and his staff also endeavored to present a positive image of African-Americans through the advertisements they created. Part of the UniWorld corporate philosophy has been to always present black consumers in a positive light. Early on in the life of the firm Lewis established a policy of rejecting ads in which blacks were to be placed in what he viewed as stereotypical situations. "I evaluate and carefully examine a product before we decide to take on a client. I would not want this agency to contribute to the social and economic ills already facing our communities," Lewis emphasized in an interview.\textsuperscript{31} While this philosophy may or may not have resulted in lost client accounts, the firm continued to grow. In 1976 UniWorld
was elected to membership in the Four A's, a status held by few other black agencies, and the firm was on the way to financial and industry success.  

**Proctor and Gardner Advertising**

The year following Lewis' entry into the agency business Barbara Proctor made a decision to join the industry. Proctor came to the advertising agency business with little direct experience. Although she had no direct experience, she had success in other creative occupations such as that of freelance writer, journalist, and television writer. She also had extensive experience in the music industry as a record company executive. In the early 1960s, Proctor decided to make a career change into the advertising industry. One of her first interviews came with the personnel director of the Leo Burnett agency. But after reviewing her credentials, the individual refused to hire her on the grounds that she was "overqualified." Therefore, she was forced to take an entry-level job with a smaller agency in order to gain experience and learn her way around the industry. The more Proctor learned about advertising, the more successful she became. By the mid-1960s, she had won a number of awards for her creative work and become one of the best known black women in the industry. Her success led some to refer to her as "the black Mary Wells," in reference to the most successful female in the industry at the time. In 1970, Proctor decided to turn her expertise and industry recognition into something no other black woman had ever attained alone—agency ownership. She commented, "They loved my work when I worked for someone else. Let's see how much they love me now."
Initially, Proctor found that starting an agency was much more problematic than working for an established firm. After some difficulty, she secured an $80,000 loan from the Small Business Administration to start her agency. She chose to combine her married name, Proctor, with her maiden name, Gardner, so that prospective clients would assume she had a male partner. She believed that sexism could prevent the acquisition of business unless people believed that there was a “man around the house.” Still, even with the careful choice of agency name, it was seven months before the Proctor landed an account.\textsuperscript{34}

After gaining the first client, however, billings began to rise steadily. The agency handled regional and national accounts for clients such as Sears-Roebuck, E.J. Gallo Winery, and Alberto Culver. Much to Proctor’s surprise, however, the firm was consistently given only accounts directed at the black consumer market. Ironically, this was a switch from Proctor’s experience in mainstream agencies, where she worked only on accounts directed at the general market. She had expected that she would be able to continue this involvement with the general market as an agency owner, but she quickly found that she was expected to handle black accounts. Yet rather than accept being “labeled,” Proctor continued to solicit for, and eventually receive, accounts directed to both the general and black consumer markets.\textsuperscript{35}

Still, within the black consumer advertising niche, Proctor made impressive progress. She argued that cultural tastes within the United States originated in the black community and then spread to the rest of the nation. Therefore, things such as black musical styles and linguistic patterns could be effectively used to
sell products to all consumers regardless of color. After her first few years in business, Procter's arguments gained greater acceptance among corporate advertising directors.\textsuperscript{36}

Notwithstanding her interest in client acquisitions, Proctor was very conscientious in the types of accounts she would accept. She refused to accept advertising assignments for products that reinforced stereotypes about blacks. She argued, "I have the opportunity to show the strength, beauty, humor and family respect that is a very proud tradition in the Black experience."\textsuperscript{37} Such statements reflected Proctor's interest in using advertising as a means for effecting changes in the image of African-Americans. She sought to portray positive images of blacks in her work so as to help move further away from the negative stereotypes of blacks that had existed in the past. Consequently, Proctor turned down accounts that did not meet her ethical standards. She also refused to handle campaigns for products she considered unhealthy such as alcohol and tobacco. Her actions definitely cost her agency in the form of lost billings, but she chose to run her firm based on her own standards of corporate and social responsibility.\textsuperscript{38}

Proctor was also an advocate for the protection and development of black-owned businesses. She argued that black agencies should be used to reach black consumers. Also, she considered the establishment of ethnic cells, like that developed at Young & Rubicam, to be "reprehensible." Black agencies, she
believed, should receive the largest share of advertising dollars directed at black consumers. Furthermore, she believed that executives of black businesses had a responsibility to support one another whenever possible.³⁹

In 1974, Proctor’s advocacy and efforts to support blacks in business erupted into controversy. Proctor announced that she would begin selecting the location for advertising placement based on the race of the owner. She stated that she would no longer place advertising where there was “flagrant exclusion of blacks from the revenues we generate.”⁴⁰ Therefore, she noted that she would give priority to black media owners over white ones. In cases where the competing media in question were both directed at black consumers she stated she would give the account to the black owner: Also, when the only option was white-owned media, she stated that she would require the account to be serviced by a black representative. She also offered that the new policy had the “100 percent” support of her clients.⁴¹

Both Proctor’s actions and the support of her clients were roundly criticized within the advertising industry. One agency executive called her actions “racist—pure and simple.” Both blacks and whites criticized the policy and reasoned that advertising should be placed only on the basis of the media in question to sell products. Although the spirit of the effort—to support black businesses—was lauded, the elevation of that support past the level of sales effectiveness was not. Eventually Proctor softened her stance, accepting the non-racial choice of the account representatives, but she continued to favor the use of black-owned media in campaigns directed to black consumers.⁴²
As a result of her success as an agency owner, her creative work, and her outspoken personality Proctor became one of the leaders of the black advertising community. Her work was cited for numerous awards, and she was personally cited for her industry and public service activities. In 1974, the Women's Ad Club of Chicago chose Proctor as Adwoman of the Year.43

By the end of the Golden Age, Proctor and Gardner billings were in excess of $5,000,000 annually. The agency was one of the few surviving full-service black-owned agencies in the industry. Throughout the 1970s, Proctor's creativity and drive helped her agency to be a strong competitor for other black-owned firms.44

**Burrell Advertising**

One year after Proctor & Gardner was opened, a second new black agency was founded in Chicago. Unlike Barbara Proctor, however, one of the principals of this new agency, Tom Burrell, had long been interested in an advertising career.

Burrell first aspired to work in the advertising industry when he was 16 years old. After taking an aptitude test and scoring high in the categories of persuasiveness and creativity, he asked a teacher to interpret his results. She told him that the marks meant he would make a good advertising copywriter. Burrell had no clear idea what an advertising copywriter was other than that it was "an exotic unknown occupation" among his friends and that it gave him a goal towards which to work. After high school Burrell graduated from Roosevelt
University with a major in English and a minor in advertising. Burrell's advertising career started in 1960 when he became aware of a unique opportunity to join the Wade advertising agency of Chicago.45

The decision to hire a black person into the Wade agency was so unique that it required the consent of the upper management team. Louis Nelson, a white Wade executive, led the effort to employ a black person. Nelson had taken stock of the social changes going on in the nation and decided that the agency should help at least one person join the advertising industry. Working in concert with sales representatives from *Ebony* magazine, Nelson struggled to locate a suitable black person to hire. The prospective interviewee pool was small because executives did not want to hire a professional-level black person into the agency. They were concerned that a black in the professional ranks might cause employees to leave the agency or clients to move their business elsewhere.

Through a series of personal contacts Burrell became aware of the opportunity at Wade, and he interviewed for the position, the only person to do so. Testifying to the unique nature of the hiring, upper level executives screened Burrell for what was one of the lowest level positions in the agency. Burrell recalled, "It was a major step because there were no African-Americans working in any capacity in any advertising agency in the city of Chicago."46 After a series of interviews, Burrell was hired into a position as an agency mailroom attendant.47

Executives informed Burrell that they wanted to start him in the mailroom and slowly advance him into the professional ranks. He, however, had different ideas about exactly how long he wished to toil in the position: "From the day that I
started working in the mailroom, I set out to demonstrate to everybody around me that I had no business being in that job, but that I should be in an executive’s job.”48 Burrell’s position gave him access to virtually all of the internal memos created in the firm and enabled him to keep abreast of ongoing issues and problems. He also relayed his knowledge to his cousin, Bill Sharp, and helped him locate work in the industry (see Chapters 3 and 4). After learning of a particularly troubling creative problem, Burrell boldly went to the creative director and announced his ability to solve the issue. Sufficiently persuaded to give him a chance, the director made Burrell a copywriting trainee two weeks later. After a short training period Burrell was promoted to the level of copywriter, and he began working on television and print campaigns for the agency.49

As a black copywriter in Chicago in the early 1960s, Burrell was in a unique position. He was one of the few blacks in the industry in the city, and he had the opportunity to work on accounts directed at the general market. In 1964 he left Wade Advertising to join the Leo Burnett agency as a copywriter. After nearly three years with Burnett, he moved to a similar position with Foote, Cone and Belding, and later to a copy supervisor post with Needham, Harper & Steers. In under ten years Burrell had made significant professional progress in the advertising industry. Yet he recalled that he was tired of “thinking in reverse” about how to sell to the general market, and that he wanted to create campaigns to reach black consumers. Also, he realized that he had no desire to reach the executive level of a mainstream corporation: “I realized that even if I had the opportunity...I would not want it. I wouldn’t like the transformation I’d have to go
through—racial, yes, but also corporate. I wanted something to shape the way I wanted it to be. Therefore, Burrell left Needham, Harper & Steers to try his hand at heading up an advertising agency.

In 1971, along with partner Emmett McBain, a former employee of Vince Cullers Advertising, Burrell opened Burrell-McBain Advertising. This was Burrell's third attempt to form an agency. The other two groups he organized were unable to secure clients and his would-be partners withdrew from the efforts before the agencies could be founded. In fact, even this third effort had lost a partner, Frank Mingo, who left the partnership before the agency opened. But rather than give up, the Burrell-McBain agency began with limited capital (they were unable to secure any loans) and no clients. Burrell stated, "We had no secretary, one telephone and three old desks which we painted red, green and orange." One month after opening Burrell, acquired the first account for the agency—a nightclub promotion that paid $1,000 per month.

In part the slow growth of the agency lay in Burrell's refusal to accept large numbers of corporate public relations accounts. Unlike black agency owners like Howard Sanders, he considered these types of projects "fickle money" that allowed a firm to remain in business, but not to grow. He did not want his firm to be selected solely on the basis that the owners were black and could help meet an affirmative action quota. Instead, he wanted the agency to be selected because of what it was able to do for clients. He noted, "Our basic philosophy is, if you don't think we can do anything for you, then we don't have anything to talk about."
In spite of the slow start, Burrell’s perseverance paid off. By the end of the first year in business, Burrell-McBain billings exceeded $500,000, and by 1973 billings crested at $1 million annually.\textsuperscript{55}

In the early years of his agency, Burrell primarily sought accounts directed to the black consumer market. Like Byron Lewis, Burrell sought to have his agency become a leader within its particular niche. He reasoned, "By specializing in the black consumer market, we found that we were setting ourselves apart from general market agencies and narrowing the competition."\textsuperscript{56} Yet after his agency had established a position in the black consumer market, Burrell planned to seek accounts for the general market. Specialization in the black consumer market was simply his “unique selling proposition” to help build his agency.\textsuperscript{57}

After struggling to acquire accounts, Burrell’s client list began to grow. In 1971, a group of black McDonald’s franchisees asked the parent corporation to hire a black agency to create ads for black consumers. Since several of the franchisees had already met and liked Burrell, the group suggested that his agency be the one of choice. After studying the effectiveness of the general market slogan for McDonald’s, “You deserve a break today,” Burrell concluded it was ineffective in reaching blacks. He argued that the theme presented McDonald’s as being a “special treat” that families utilized sporadically. In the black community, however, residents visited McDonald’s restaurants several times per day. Therefore he suggested the theme, “McDonald’s is good to have
around." The ads conveyed an appreciation of the stature of McDonald's in the black community and that the restaurants sold products that helped black families throughout the day.\textsuperscript{58}

In addition to changing the theme utilized by McDonald's in the black community, Burrell also created ads that conveyed his vision of black life. Print advertisements for the company often showed scenes of black families enjoying a meal together. Studies indicated that blacks were particularly responsive to scenes that featured a black male who was present as head of the household and participating in family life. Also, Burrell argued that since many blacks grew up in homes without a father figure it was important to "present an image to them, not of what is, but of what could and should be."\textsuperscript{59} The advertisements Burrell created for McDonald's were so effective that executives assigned the firm a greater share of company marketing efforts to black consumers.\textsuperscript{60}

Along with the McDonald's account, Burrell's other early major client breakthrough came in 1972 when he acquired an ethnic marketing account for Coca-Cola. The current Coke general marketing theme was "Look up, America, and see what you've got." Burrell argued that the theme was inappropriate for the black community because blacks were not yet at a point where they could take pride in the American experience. As an alternative, he counseled executives to use the theme, "For the real times, it's the real thing." The reworked theme tapped into blacks' current social reality and offered Coke as a welcome respite from the demands of the times. The campaign proved so effective that Burrell's agency eventually handled all Coca-Cola advertising to
black consumers. Moreover, as had occurred with work for McDonald's, work for Coca-Cola gave Burrell access to work on television commercials, an option that other black-owned agencies did not have. Burrell recalled, "It [television] helped establish us, it separated us [and] it helped give us tremendous visibility."

Another of Burrell's early client acquisitions was the Philip Morris company. His early work for the Philip Morris was notable for the definitions of black male masculinity that were expressed. Philip Morris executives had approached Burrell because the top cigarette, Marlboro, was not the number one brand among black consumers. Burrell and McBain concluded that the central figure of the advertisements, the Marlboro Man, was the cause for the low sales. They argued that, although whites considered the Marlboro Man a "hero," blacks considered him a "loser." Research indicated that blacks defined manhood as "a man who took charge of family, lived in the city, [and] was involved with people in a responsible role." Where the cowboy was an individual, a black man was with his family or friends; where the cowboy was alone, a black man was active in his community. Hence blacks' definition of manhood was an almost complete reversal of that of the individualistic cowboy prevalent in Marlboro ads. The advertisements created by Burrell and others at the agency featured a black man as the central figure. The man was located in urban settings and was usually depicted as being on the move. The images conveyed the sense that the black Marlboro man was someone who had places to go and that wherever he was headed was the place to be. One observer recalled "Tom and Emmett totally redefined masculinity for this new audience."
Despite being credited with helping to increase sales among blacks, however, the urban Marlboro Man series was terminated. A bystander who was photographed in the background of one the ads threatened to sue Philip Morris for the use of his image. The man was an anti-smoking advocate and he objected to the use of his image in tobacco advertising. After the case was settled out of court a number of other bystanders threatened to sue the company as well. Also, agency executives who ran the general market advertising for Marlboro objected to the new urbanized version.\(^64\)

The astute positioning of his staff as experts on the black consumer market was one cause for the growth of Burrell's agency. An additional factor was the creativity that Burrell and the agency staff used in the production of advertisements. Burrell pioneered a concept he called "positive realism." He was actively creating a positive stereotype in which blacks were presented in a uplifting rather than negative manner. Hence, just as he placed images of black fathers in advertisements because it was an expression of what should and could be true in life, Burrell used images of blacks that he believed were worthy of emulation.\(^65\)

Burrell argued that black consumers were "not just dark skinned white people," but a group that had to be approached in a unique and creative manner. Moreover, he reasoned that to reach black consumers, advertisements had to reflect positively on them as a group and on the product in question. Thus, Burrell utilized aspects of African-American life and culture extensively in his creative work and he encouraged his staff to do the same. Images of loving
black families, Sunday-morning church activities, black children playing double-dutch, and images of black kids harmonizing on a tenement stoop all proved effective. He recalled, "In many cases, the work that had the African-American folks in it, that had this whole African-American slant to it, had higher recognition, awareness, and likability than the spots targeted to the non-African-American market." Moreover, "We felt that by showing people in a positive way, unlike the way they had been shown before, it was going to be effective—it was actually going to sell product."

In spite of the problems with the Marlboro campaign and the slow acquisition of billings, Burrell's advertising and business philosophy proved effective. Although Emmett McBain left the agency in 1974, the firm remained financially and creatively strong. The agency sustained a steady rate of billings growth throughout the Golden Age and in 1975 was elected to membership in the Four A's. Burrell was also able to penetrate the general market through ads found to have "crossover" appeal from the black consumer market. He was also active in a number of efforts to increase the presence of blacks in the advertising industry. He was involved in the Basic Advertising Course as well as a series of less-publicized efforts to retain blacks in the agency business. Burrell also consciously sought to project positive images of African-Americans. He noted, "It just so happens that the things we sell also enhances the [black] community and help to reinforce a positive self image." By the end of the 1970s the agency had become the second-largest black-owned agency in the nation.
The Success of Black-Owned Agencies

In terms of what made Cullers, Lewis, Proctor, and Burrell succeed, where other agency owners failed, there is no single factor in common. Burrell had a concrete policy against accepting large numbers of corporate public relations accounts, but Lewis and Proctor were not as rigid. Also, Junius Edwards had a similar policy but it did not save his agency. The four agencies did create a number of outstanding and award-winning advertisements, but so too did some of the agencies which perished. What the three agencies did have in common was that each of the owners was able to justify effectively reasons for their existence. They did so by continually emphasizing what they were able to do for clients in order to increase product sales. Staff members of black agencies compiled extensive research on black consumers purchasing habits and motivations. They demonstrated that they were able to communicate with and sell to black consumers.

In addition, black agencies, owners argued, were the only true general market agencies in the nation. Mainstream agencies executives, they contended, focused their efforts on communicating only with the white general market. Therefore, it was the so-called mainstream agencies that were actually practicing segmented marketing. On the other hand, black agencies created campaigns that, while often emphasizing the black consumer, were sure to appeal to, or at least not alienate, other consumer groups. One reporter reasoned, “Evidence [is] mounting that black consumer-oriented firms have the same—and in some cases greater—expertise in reaching all audiences.” Thus black-owned agency
personnel, some argued, had helped to finally make advertising that appealed to all consumers. Leaders of each of the surviving agencies were able to gain limited, but consistent, work in the general market that helped to broaden the audiences their work reached.

**Conclusion**

Black agency owners pressured corporate executives to approach black consumers in the same way that they approached white consumers—with well researched and thought out campaigns. Black agency leaders encouraged corporate executives to discard their corporate public relations campaigns and replace them with appeals for black consumer patronage. Black adman Frank Mingo wrote, "It is no longer enough to run full-page corporate ads referring obliquely to Crispus Attucks, Sojourner Truth, W.E.B. DuBois and stating what a good liberal company you are or boasting of the handful of black employees (complete with pictures) you have managed to hire." Many black agency owners also considered part of their responsibility was to help rehabilitate the image of blacks in America. Black adman Howard Sanders argued that black advertising agencies would "portray the black more honestly." Other admen, such as Arthur Mitchell echoed Sanders' point. Mitchell noted that he was "not so much interested in making money as in changing images." While Mitchell may have had few adherents to the elevation of images over profit, he alluded to an important part of the mission of black agencies. As Dates notes, once blacks had achieved decision-making positions they worked to "undermine" the images that had previously existed. Also, black image makers "struggled to
recreate an authentic self-image, and hence to reclaim [blacks'] historical identity.\textsuperscript{74} This is not to say that black advertising agencies were not in business to make a profit and increase product sales, but one of their first priorities and most lasting contributions was in helping to reconstruct the African-American image.
Notes


3 "The Soul Market in Black and White," 42.

4 Ibid., 40.

5 Ibid., 40-42.

6 Van Deburg, 195.


8 Ebony, advertisement, Advertising Age (September 30, 1968): 33.


11 Quoted in Van Deburg, 201.


20 Quoted in Moore, 160, 163.

21 Van Deburg, 194.

22 Woods, 156.


25 Anderson, 11.


31 Quoted in Woods, 167.


"Barbara Gardner Proctor," 566-569; "Barbara Proctor: I Made it," 143-144;


"Barbara Proctor's Definition of the Ad Function: Helping Client, Consumer Touch Base," *Advertising Age* (March 25, 1974): 106. Proctor was able to maintain her standard of refusing alcohol and tobacco products for the duration of the 1970s. However, as her firm continued to lose billings in the 1980s she accepted accounts for both alcoholic beverage and tobacco products.

"Barbara Proctor's Definition of the Ad Function," 106.


Ibid.


Tom Burrell, interview with author.

Ibid.


Smikle, 44-52; Brooks and Walls, 17-18; "Thomas J. Burrell, 125-126.
Some of Burrell's advertisements were also very popular with international audiences. See *Inside Business Today: Marketing to Minorities*, prod. ArGee Productions, 30 min., University of Wisconsin Telecommunications Center, 1983, video cassette.

Fox credited black agency leaders with helping to transform the face of American advertising. He concludes, "The white ethnics, blacks, and women transformed the face, as well as the body and soul, of American advertising. Even after the cycle turned and the creative revolution grew unfashionable, advertising still looked different, in both its people and its products. It more truly reflected American society," see Fox, 299.

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CONCLUSION

The development of an African-American presence in the advertising industry was a lengthy process. Once in the industry, although their numbers in relation to total industry employment remained small, black image-makers became an important force. Black advertising men and women placed themselves at the center of the formation of the image of African-Americans as consumers. In so doing, they helped to extend African-Americans’ consumer citizenship to go along with their citizenship rights.

Yet African-Americans interested in being part of the advertising industry did not gain a place in the industry solely as a result of their individual efforts. In fact, the virtual explosion in African-American employment that took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s came only after years of effort by many different individuals and groups. Leading the effort were African-American newspaper editors and publishers. Historians of the African-American press have credited black newspapers with having been the “greatest single power in the race.”1 Along with the African-American church, for many years the black press was the only institution controlled by African-Americans. Still, black newspaper publishers struggled for the advertising revenue to maintain their journals. As a result, black newspaper editors and publishers led the struggle to encourage
corporate advertisers to reach out to black consumers via their publications. Although it took several years to do so, executives eventually began to show a increased interest in the African-American consumer market. Unfortunately for most black newspaper and magazine owners, they were not financially rewarded to a level commensurate with the effort they had expended. Instead, corporate advertisers reached out to black consumers only through a few select organs such as *Ebony* magazine and radio programs directed to black consumers.

As corporate executives extended their reach to black consumers in the 1950s, however, many found their sales messages poorly received. Stepping in to become the nexus between corporate advertisers and black consumers were African-American entrepreneurs who acted as advertising and marketing consultants. These men and women successfully encouraged corporate advertisers to approach black consumers in a more respectful way than had been done in the past. Black marketing consultants informed corporate executives that to be successful in the black consumer market, the stereotypical images of blacks used in the past had to be eliminated. Moreover, these men and women were at the forefront of encouraging a more reasoned and respectful approach to the black consumer market.

The social upheaval of the 1960s brought even further changes to the black consumer market and, eventually, to the advertising industry. During the 1960s, blacks engaged in a series of protests in which they successfully utilized their economic power to press for the extension of political and social rights. In addition, the advertising industry began to receive a greater amount of attention
from civil rights activists. Activists began to press industry leaders to promote images of racial integration and to employ more blacks in the industry. Although there had been a few blacks in the industry prior to the 1960s protests, activists emphasized that agency leaders should undertake greater efforts to train and employ blacks. Simultaneous with the rise of civil rights pressure on the industry was pressure from government equal opportunities groups for advertising agencies to present more racially inclusive images in advertisements. Like civil rights activists, government commissions also pressed agency leaders to recruit and employ more blacks and other minorities. The result of the external and internal pressure on the industry was an increase in the number of blacks in the advertising industry. Further, by the late 1960s, blacks found greater opportunities to become agency owners. Although several black agencies failed, the survivors became an important part of the industry. Leaders of the black agencies occupied an important position of cultural influence as they presented images of African-American consumption and identity.

By the mid-1970s, black faces had also begun to appear regularly in the nation's television advertisements. In fact, some of the most recognizable corporate spokespersons in the 1970s were black. Bill Cosby, O.J. Simpson, Pearl Bailey, and Sammy Davis, Jr., to name just a few, helped to increase sales of the products they championed. For example, the sale of Jell-O increased over 30 percent after Bill Cosby became spokesperson for the product. While one
cannot attribute sales increases solely to advertising, it was at least clear that most Americans had few problems with black faces representing the products they purchased.²

Still, the Golden Age of blacks in the advertising industry, 1968 to 1975, remained the pinnacle of black employment in the industry. Although the total number of blacks in the industry continued to rise, so did the overall total of persons employed in advertising. As a result, African-American employment, a quarter of a century later and more, had yet to crest past the percentage reached by 1975—10 percent of the industry total. Advertising leaders continued to struggle with ways to increase the number of minority employees, and many blacks in the industry continued to express frustration because of the limited results.

Sociologist T.W. Adorno posited that, "To change a culture you have to change several different things at once."³ Throughout the twentieth century, African-Americans struggled to change many aspects of their experiences with the larger culture: racial discrimination and violence, as well as various political, social, and economic inequities. These efforts by blacks may be summarized as a struggle for complete citizenship within America—the right to live where one wants and without fears of violence, to participate in all aspects of political and social life, and to advance as far professionally as talent and ability will allow.

Interwoven with each of blacks' larger struggles in American society was the effort by individual blacks and civil rights groups to change the negative and demeaning images that had proliferated in minstrel songs, in toys and products,
and in advertisements. The images of blacks displayed in advertising for much of the century had conveyed an impression that blacks were either sub-human, fit only for service occupations, or nonexistent. Using advertisements as a barometer, blacks did not brush their teeth, comb their hair, worry about dandruff, or generate ring around the collar. Through the presentation of the ideal American life, advertising images had the power to confirm or deny blacks status in the nation. As a result the advertising industry was a natural target for those who sought to enhance the African-American image. Moreover, the proliferation of advertising during the twentieth century, via magazines, billboards, radio, and television, made the image of blacks via advertising a primary feature to be changed.

Yet blacks sought to do more than eliminate the negative and demeaning stereotypes in advertisements. African-Americans also desired to be recognized for their participation in the consumer culture. With the shift from a producer to a consumer society, consumption became identified as an aspect of citizenship. For blacks, advertising was a source that did more than confirm their presence as consumers. It also confirmed their status as citizens. By not recognizing African-Americans through advertisements as consumers, blacks were effectively defined by advertisers as outside the realm of U.S. citizenship. As they did in other areas of life in which they were excluded, blacks rejected this position. The American consumer, blacks contended, was not white. Instead, American consumers (and citizens) came in a variety of skin tones and from a range of ethnic backgrounds.
Along with arguing for a more inclusive depiction of American consumption, blacks demonstrated that racism was inconsistent with capitalism. Blacks were active, loyal consumers who, when courted with the appropriate sales appeals, responded by purchasing products in impressive numbers. African-American consumers, blacks in advertising posited, could mean the difference between success and failure for some products. Therefore blacks effectively pressed advertisers and agencies to acknowledge them for their consumption, and, thereby, to recognize their citizenship.

Once in the advertising industry, blacks, in so far as they were able, used their positions to present what they viewed as authentic representations of black family life, history, and community involvement. In the hands of some black image-makers, advertising became a tool not only to sell products and gain personal achievement, but also to depict positive representations of blacks. As a result, blacks in the industry not only fulfilled their personal ambitions for success and upward mobility, but also fulfilled the larger group aspiration of full citizenship and recognition of black humanity. In “selling” black consumers to advertisers blacks were able to fulfill a social and economic goal. Since the 1920s, blacks involved in advertising recognized that the best way to increase sales among black consumers was through the utilization of positive images. Consequently, blacks in the industry were able to use advertising images to present what they considered to be a positive representation of blacks and to increase sales. Hence there was no contradiction between desires for personal achievement and group ambitions for blacks in America.
Some blacks in the industry sought not only to present positive images of blacks, but also to protect blacks from products or services they considered to be unhealthy. For example, Barbara Proctor had a standing policy against accepting assignments to develop campaigns for alcohol and tobacco products. Thomas Burrell eventually adopted a similar policy against working on campaigns for tobacco products. Still, other blacks in the industry readily accepted such campaigns under the reasoning that such products were not illegal. Moreover, advertisers for alcohol and tobacco products were some of the largest advertisers in the nation, and to refuse such products potentially meant a heavy loss of advertising revenue. Consequently, while the presentation of positive images of blacks was largely universal among blacks in the industry, the question of what type of advertising work to accept was answered on an individual basis.

Blacks in the advertising industry to a considerable degree became successful by acting as the gatekeepers of the African-American image as presented in advertisements. From this position blacks were careful about exactly what sorts of images of blacks were depicted. Images of blacks engaged in middle-class, often white-collar, urban lifestyles predominated. Blacks in the industry thus challenged the existing racial hierarchy that had been confirmed and reinforced via advertising. Through their efforts to present a more authentic picture of African-American life, blacks in the advertising industry were an important part of social and cultural change and reform.
In 1926, African-American writer Langston Hughes described the efforts of black artists during the Harlem Renaissance to define their group and individual identity. He wrote,

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves.4

Blacks creatives in the advertising industry were artists and heirs of the tradition that Hughes described: African-Americans defining their own identity and humanity. African-American image-makers helped to define blackness and to define African-Americans as part of the American scene.
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