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Introduction

This book introduces English-language readers to the historical (1870–1960) Black newspapers and magazines of Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, and Uruguay. In Latin America, the violence of enslavement, limited access to primary education and the world of publishing, and exclusion from regional archives and libraries make documents and texts produced by Afrodescendants themselves extremely rare.[1] The majority of the abundant documentary evidence of the participation of Africans and their descendants in the region's history was created by state and Church officials and institutions, lawyers, policemen, foreign visitors to the region, journalists, scientists, and others, most of whom were not themselves of African descent. Yet in their own periodical publications, Afro-Latin Americans eloquently expressed their thoughts on a host of social and political issues: slavery, race and racism, democracy, civic and social equality, gender, African-based culture, economic development, literature and the arts, parenting, and others. Those newspapers and magazines are the richest and most concentrated venue for Black voices in Latin American history.

Afro-Latin American newspapers are the direct analogue of, and were occasionally in dialogue with, the African American press in the United States. Yet they are virtually unknown in the English-speaking world and are in any case beyond the reach of audiences who do not

[1] For examples of historical texts by Black authors, see McKnight and Garofalo, eds., *Afro-Latino Voices*; de Jesús, *The Spiritual Diary*; Acree and Borucki, eds., *Jacinto Ventura de Molina*; Manzano, *Autobiography of a Slave*; Batrell, *A Black Soldier's Story*; Leite and Cuti, . . . *E disse o velho militante*; Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*.

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read Spanish or Portuguese.[2] These barriers have deprived readers of access to an invaluable source of Afro-Latin American thought, as well as a wealth of detail about Black community life and political activism across these diverse local contexts. *Voices of the Race* brings English-language audiences a translated and annotated selection of articles from those papers, and through them, fuller access to the community life and the intellectual production of people of African descent across Latin America.

As readers may have noticed, we use "Black" interchangeably with "Afro-Latin American" or "Afrodescendant" to designate people who were regarded by themselves and others as having some visible degree of African ancestry, indicated by skin color or other features. In so doing, we follow the present-day consensus among scholars and activists in both Latin America and the United States. Yet these were not necessarily the preferred terms of self-identification of the writers or readers of these newspapers. Indeed, the naming or not naming of racial communities, the different contours of these communities across different places and times, and the various ways that Black writers engaged with their respective nations' guiding ideologies of race are at the heart of the story about Latin America's Black press: what it is, where and why it emerged, who wrote and read it, and what forms it took.

WHAT IS THE BLACK PRESS OF LATIN AMERICA?

The Black press of Latin America consists of newsletters, newspapers, and magazines produced by Afrodescendant writers and directed primarily at a Black readership.[3] These publications were not designed to be a principal

[2] Recognizing the importance of this unique source, historians started researching the Afro-Latin American press in the 1960s and 1970s, and in recent years numerous monographs have been largely or partially based on the papers. Those monographs provide a clear sense of the content of the Black papers and of the themes of greatest interest to the men and women who wrote them. But owing to the constraints of monographic writing, they offer only brief snippets of the thought and writing contained in the papers. For early works utilizing the Black press, see Pereda Valdés, *El negro en el Uruguay*; Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires*; Deschamps Chapeaux, *El negro en el periodismo cubano*; Ferrara, *A imprensa negra paulista*; Ferrara, *Imprensa negra*. For examples of more recent work, see Alberto, *Terms of Inclusion*; Andrews, *Blackness in the White Nation*; de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*; Rodríguez, *Mbundo malungo a mundele*; Pinto, *Imprensa negra*; Santos, *Raiou a Alvorada*; Pappademos, *Black Political Activism*; Fernández Calderón, *Páginas en conflicto*; Brunson, "'Writing' Black Womanhood"; Poumier, *La cuestión tabú*; Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won*; Domingues, *Uma história não contada*; Hoffnung-Garskof, *Racial Migrations*; Geler, *Andares negros*; Goldman, *Negros modernos*; Alberto, *Black Legend*; Ramos and Pinto, eds., *A imprensa negra*.

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source of news and commentary. They were what scholars call a "complementary" press, meant to be read alongside broader-circulation local and national newspapers (often called the "mainstream" press). Writers and editors in the Black press were deeply engaged with periodicals edited primarily by White colleagues (as they were with other Black publications and colleagues), often quoting them extensively or writing in direct response to their coverage. Indeed, Black publications frequently addressed a broader public, including White journalists and politicians, in the name of a racial community. Black newspapers and magazines sometimes announced themselves as the "organs" or "defenders" of "the **class of color**," "the Black race," or "our community," and sometimes they did not.

Brazil is the country with the most extensive, oldest, and best-known Black press in the region. It is also the country with the longest and most extensive experience of slavery in the Americas: slave traders brought more African captives to Brazil than to any other New World society, and it was the last country in the region to abolish slavery. Enslaved people toiled in almost all areas of Brazil's economy, from booming plantations (primarily sugar and coffee) and mines to domestic work and street vending. Brazil remains the country with the largest Afrodescendant population in the hemisphere. At the time of the 2010 census, over 96 million Brazilians (just over half the total population) identified as *preto* (Black) or *pardo* (brown), confirming Brazil as a majority Afrodescendant country. By comparison, in the 2010 census of the United States, 39 million people identified as African American, about 13 percent of the population.[4]

The first Afro-Latin American newspapers appeared in the newly independent Empire of Brazil in the 1830s (roughly contemporaneously with the first African American papers in the United States).[5] But the Brazilian Black press expanded especially rapidly after the abolition of slavery in

[3] Writers in some countries occasionally used the term "Black press" (*prensa negra* in Spanish and *imprensa negra* in Portuguese) in relation to their publications. But the term emerges most frequently as a descriptor in academic works from the mid twentieth century onward, especially by scholars based in the United States, where a self-described Afro-American, African American, or Black press has been historically robust and visible. Danky and Hady, eds., *African-American Newspapers and Periodicals*; Vogel, *The Black Press*; Delmont, *Black Quotidian*.

[4] For Brazil, see https://biblioteca.ibge.gov.br/index.php/biblioteca-catalogo?view=detalhes&id=793; for the United States, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf.

[5] *O Homem de Cor* (The Man of Color), published in Rio de Janeiro in 1833, appeared only six years after the first African American newspaper, *Freedom's Journal* (New York, 1827). Pinto, *Imprensa negra*, pp. 23–24; Foster, "A Narrative of the Interesting Origins."

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1888 and the replacement in 1889 of the monarchy with a republic. Black writers and editors were particularly active in the cities and towns of the southeastern state of São Paulo, where Black Brazilians lived in spaces increasingly dominated by European immigrants.[6] Many Black publications began as newsletters associated with neighborhood-based social clubs for the "**class of color** (*classe de cor*)," and much of the coverage in papers like *O Bandeirante*, *O Baluarte*, *O Kosmos,* and others from the era focused on community or club events. Editors adopted variants of the phrase "organ of the men of color" on their mastheads, and called for Black Brazilians to assert full political, civil, and dignitary rights. They noted that the equality promised by republican laws was constantly threatened by racist ideas and practices. Many White writers in this period described Brazil as a unique "racial paradise" where, despite legacies of slavery and colonialism, three races (White, Black, Indigenous) lived in harmony. Black writers often invoked this shared ideal of interracial fraternity to support calls to remove real barriers to full Black citizenship.[7]

By the mid 1920s, a new generation of Afro-Brazilian writers in São Paulo city and state created publications increasingly aimed at discussing and combating racism directly and asserting the existence of a national (and often Afro-diasporic) racial community linked by a shared past and destiny. Political involvement in these years reshaped editors' sense of mission. Toward the end of the decade, for example, the editors of *O Clarim da Alvorada* (The Clarion of Dawn), initially a "literary, scientific, and humorous" publication, helped create the **Centro Cívico Palmares** in an effort to amalgamate the city's disparate Black associations. After this experience, they declared *O Clarim* a publication "in the interest of Black men" and dedicated to "struggle [*combate*]." In the 1930s, the **Frente Negra Brasileira**, a civic organization that briefly gave rise to one of the region's few Black political parties, further cemented the relationship between activism and São Paulo's Black press. The Frente Negra distributed thousands of copies of its newspaper, *A Voz da Raça* (The Voice of the Race), throughout Brazil. During Brazil's turbulent

[6] Similar papers appeared in other southern and southeastern Brazilian states: e.g., in Rio Grande do Sul, *O Exemplo* and *A Alvorada*; and in Minas Gerais, *A Raça*. Santos, *Raiou a Alvorada*; Pinto, *Imprensa negra*, pp. 137–71.

[7] On this ideal, see Alberto, *Terms of Inclusion,* chapter 2. The discussion of the early Paulista (from São Paulo) Black press in this paragraph and the next also draws from Andrews, *Blacks and Whites*; Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won*; Domingues, *Uma história não contada;* Domingues, "A insurgência de ébano"; Gomes, *Negros e política*; Ferrara, *A imprensa negra paulista;* Graham, *Shifting the Meaning of Democracy*.

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1930s, the Black press expanded to occupy the full spectrum of political positions between fascism and communism, but fell largely silent with the onset of the **Estado Novo** dictatorship (1937–45), which shut down political parties and heavily censored the press.

In Brazil's capital, Rio de Janeiro, fewer Black publications appeared in the first decades of the twentieth century. But in the wake of World War II, as Brazil's government returned to democracy and as Black activists re-organized, influential new publications emerged there. *Quilombo,* dedicated to the "Life, problems, and aspirations of the Black man," joined journals like *Alvorada* and *Senzala*, published in São Paulo (the latter with contributors from Rio and other states), as spaces for Black cultural criticism, political activism, and civil rights advocacy. The Black press of this era faced distinctive opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, the restoration of Brazil's democratic institutions brought hope that the country might begin to fulfill its promise as an inclusive and egalitarian multi-racial state. On the other hand, fulsome celebrations of Brazil as a singular "**racial democracy**" to be emulated the world over threatened to undermine the work of Black writers by declaring racism a non-issue. Indeed, while some White Brazilians backed Black writers' anti-racist demands, many others used the idea of racial democracy to represent Black organizations and publications as "reverse racists" who refused to subordinate their particular identities to the national whole.[8]

In Argentina, journalists created a Black press in a society with a much smaller and less visible Afrodescendant population. In 2010, only about 150,000 Argentines identified as Afrodescendant, out of a total population of more than 40 million inhabitants, though the number of Argentines with unacknowledged African ancestry is surely much higher.[9] Yet the Black population had historically been much more significant, if never as large as Brazil's. Buenos Aires had been one of the principal ports for the trade in African captives to Spanish America, and about one-third of the city's population, and higher proportions of some

[8] Alberto, *Terms of Inclusion*; Guimarães, *Classes, raças e democracia*; Graham, *Shifting the Meaning of Democracy*.

[9] For census figures, see https://sitioanterior.indec.gob.ar/nivel4_default.asp?id_tema_1=2&id_tema_2=21&id_tema_3=100. On alternative population counts, see Andrews, "Epilogue"; Lamadrid, Lamadrid, and Cirio, "Primer censo autogestionado." Preliminary test cases for the 2010 census, targeting areas of known Afro-Argentine residence in the cities of Santa Fe and Buenos Aires, registered between 3.5 percent and 4.3 percent of respondents with acknowledged African ancestry. Stubbs and Reyes, *Más allá de los promedios*.

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interior provinces, was Afrodescendant when Spanish colonial rule came to an end in the early nineteenth century. The territory that became Argentina had relatively little plantation agriculture, with most Afro-Argentines, free and enslaved, working in domestic service, trades, ranching, and small-scale manufacturing.[10]

The earliest known Afro-Argentine publications appeared in Buenos Aires in 1858, under the titles of *La Raza Africana, o sea El Demócrata Negro* (The African Race, or the Black Democrat), and *El Proletario*. Slavery had been abolished in 1853 (except in the province of Buenos Aires, where abolition came in 1860), and free Afro-Argentine men, many of whom were veterans of the military campaigns of the previous decades, were fully enfranchised as citizens and voters. Those two papers were short-lived, however. The bulk of Argentina's Black press dates from the 1870s and 1880s, when the first generation of Argentines to benefit from a massive expansion of state-sponsored education came of age. Even as this small but dynamic Afrodescendant press flourished and found readers among a robust Black urban community, it was becoming difficult to know how many people of African descent lived in Argentina. After independence, and increasingly after midcentury, census officials and many other record-keepers stopped recording race or color categories (perceived as holdovers of a hierarchical colonial past) in the name of the nation's guiding principles of liberal racelessness, universal citizenship, and legal equality.[11]

Citizenship without regard to race was a value that many Black Argentine men and women embraced, and for which many had fought. Indeed, this second generation of Afro-Argentine editors avoided references to race in their newspapers' titles and descriptions, taking advantage of the openings that purportedly raceless liberalism appeared to offer to assert their belonging as full Argentine citizens. Mastheads announced these publications as the "organ of the working class" or a "weekly newspaper of general interest." Yet the papers still largely reported on and directed themselves toward Afro-Argentine readers. In 1881, the editors of *La Broma* (The Jest) reflected on that newspaper's evolution as it balanced its readers' general concerns as Argentines with their specific

[10] Borucki, *From Shipmates to Soldiers*; Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires*.

[11] The 1887 municipal census of Buenos Aires recorded a total of 8,005 people of "other colors" than White, under 2 percent of the total population of 433,000. The 1869 and 1895 national censuses offered no information on race or color. Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires*; Guzmán, "¿Quiénes son los trigueños?"; Alberto, *Black Legend*.

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concerns as Afro-Argentines. Though originally a satirical paper, they noted, in the course of reporting on several major incidents of racial injustice, *La Broma* had become "a space for airing issues of great social importance." The editors added that "it is well understood that [*La Broma*] is the true and genuine organ of the humbler classes, the true interpreter of the beneficial social developments of the so-called people of 'color'."[12] Editors' forthright identification with Buenos Aires' "humbler classes," like their use of "so-called" or their placement of "color" in quotation marks, illustrates the reticence many in this generation felt toward racial identifications, and their aspiration to become unmarked Argentines (or ones marked at most by their identities as working people).[13]

Yet if in the 1870s and 1880s, some Afro-Argentines expressed a hope that liberal principles of colorlessness would abolish racism and ensure full respect and recognition for people of African descent, the events of the next decades proved disappointing. The liberal practice of omitting race in population counts led, by the end of the nineteenth century, to repeated assertions among White Argentine writers and statesmen that Afro-Argentines had all but disappeared, victims of wars, disease, and intermixture with the European immigrants who began arriving in waves.[14] At the turn of the century, moreover, discourses of racelessness faded as Argentine elites increasingly equated Argentineness with Whiteness, and anti-Black racism became particularly virulent, backed by the era's **scientific racist** discourses. In the first decades of the twentieth century, as Argentine elites remade Buenos Aires into the "Paris of Latin America," urban renewal projects pushed Afro-Argentines out of the central neighborhoods they had inhabited since colonial times to outlying marginal areas.[15] Afrodescendant writers and readers did not disappear – a few Black papers (lost to researchers) emerged in the first decades of the twentieth century (see Figures 0.1, 0.2), while some veterans of the

[12] "Porqué se llama 'La Broma'?", *La Broma* (Mar. 20, 1881), 1.

[13] On these themes in the nineteenth-century Afro-Argentine press, see Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires*; Geler, *Andares negros*; Ghidoli, *Estereotipos en negro*; Cirio, *Tinta negra en el gris de ayer*; Platero, *Piedra libre para nuestros negros*; Alberto, *Black Legend*.

[14] Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires*; Geler, *Andares negros*; Frigerio, *Cultura negra*.

[15] On the recrudescence of racism in turn-of-the-century Buenos Aires, see Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires*; Geler and Ghidoli, "Falucho"; Alberto, *Black Legend*; Frigerio, "'Sin otro delito'"; Helg, "Race in Argentina and Cuba." On geographic displacement, Geler et al., "Constructing the White City."

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FIGURE 0.1 The editor (identified as "Mr. Terreiros") and administrator of the Argentine newspaper *La Ortiga* in the paper's offices. From Juan José de Soiza Reilly, "Gente de color," *Caras y Caretas* (Nov. 25, 1905).

Black press went on to join labor or mainstream newspapers, or published books of their own.[16] But as the bonds of racial community dissolved through dispersion, state-enforced practices of assimilation, and shifting racial identifications in a nation that elites increasingly declared

[16] These publications include the weekly *La Ortiga* and the biweekly *La Verdad*. The latter was founded by **Benedicto Ferreyra** (see front cover) in the early 1900s, ceased publication sometime after 1915, and was reissued by his son **Oscar Ferreyra** in the early 1930s. On these early twentieth-century papers and the community that sustained them, see Alberto, *Black Legend*, chapter 3. For the publications of Afro-Argentine writers, see Ghidoli, *Estereotipos en negro*, chapter 6.

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FIGURE 0.2 **Oscar Ferreyra**, second editor of *La Verdad*, in his home office, preparing to reissue the early twentieth-century *La Verdad* (founded by his father, **Benedicto Ferreyra**) after a hiatus. From Martín Martirena, "Periodismo de color," *Caras y Caretas* (Apr. 25, 1931).

homogeneously White, the Afro-Argentine press went silent for the rest of the century.[17]

Uruguay shares borders with both Brazil and Argentina, and the history and dynamics of its Black press combine key features of those of its neighbors.[18] In the national household survey of 2006 and the national census of 2011, 8–9 percent of Uruguayans identified themselves as having some African ancestry.[19] Like Buenos Aires, Uruguay's capital, Montevideo, was a major entry point for African captives in the Spanish colonial period and was home to a substantial Afrodescendant minority when Uruguay became independent in the early nineteenth century.

[17] Argentina's Black press is reemerging in the twenty-first century; see *El Afroargentino* (est. 2014), the publication of DIAFAR (Diáspora Africana de la Argentina).

[18] Information in the following paragraphs based on Borucki, *From Shipmates to Soldiers*; Andrews, *Blackness in the White Nation*; Rodríguez, *Mbundo malungo a mundele*.

[19] Bucheli and Cabela, *Perfil demográfico y socioeconómico*, pp. 14–15; Cabella et al., *La población afro-uruguaya*, p. 15.

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Afrodescendant editors began publishing newspapers in the 1870s, three decades after the abolition of slavery (1842) and in the context of universal manhood suffrage. Frustrated by the patronage systems that tied Black voters to the two entrenched political parties and military factions, papers like *La Conservación* and *El Progresista* argued that education and constitutional and civic values were crucial for the advancement of the "interests of the society of color." As in neighboring Argentina, Uruguay's very high literacy rate helped support a flourishing Black press, one that paid close attention both to national- and local-level events affecting the Black community.

Like counterparts in Argentina, by the end of the century, White Uruguayan statesmen congratulated themselves on the success of their project to "Whiten" the nation through immigration. Yet White immigration to Uruguay never reached the levels seen in Argentina, nor did Afro-Uruguayans become statistically, socially, and culturally invisible after 1900 as they did in that neighboring country. Well-defined Black communities persisted in Montevideo and in Uruguay's northern departments, which bordered Brazil and had close ties with Black communities across the border. Indeed, migration from the north replenished and reinforced Black communities, identities, and institutions in Montevideo. In this context, Afro-Uruguayan writers, like their Brazilian counterparts, produced one of the most prolific and long-lived Black presses in the region. By the 1920s and 1930s, Black newspapers had developed new forms of political radicalism that incorporated Marxism, anti-fascism, and anti-colonialism, while also articulating a strong sense of racial solidarity within Uruguay and with Black people in other parts of the Americas and the world. The editors of the newspaper *Nuestra Raza* (Our Race), which appeared regularly from 1933 to 1948, supported the unionization of female domestic workers. They also led an initiative, in 1936, to create the **Partido Autóctono Negro** (Autochthonous Black Party), focused on the rights of Black workers within a broader working-class coalition.

In the 1940s, Black journalists focused on racial discrimination in education and employment, which kept Afro-Uruguayans out of the growing middle class. As in neighboring Brazil at the same time, some White journalists joined this denunciation of racial discrimination, while others denied that any racism existed, blaming Afro-Uruguayans for their supposed failure to take advantage of equal opportunity. The Uruguayan Black press also worked to promote the visibility of Afro-Uruguayan culture, especially **Carnival** parades, in the national public sphere. A new appreciation for Black culture, writers reasoned, would reduce

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