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**Supplementing the News:
An Industry-Based Description of Magazine Supplements
in the Black Press 1950-2000**

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Abstract

Daily newspapers and black-owned weeklies have used magazine supplements to expand their black audiences. Appearing on Sundays or in time for the weekend, the magazine supplements were often intended to infuse spice in the main paper and provide added value for readers through their design, features, and targeted content. This industry-based description of magazine supplements in the second half of the 20th century seeks to shed light on a little-known segment of the black press. It will highlight leading publications such as *Tuesday*, *Dawn* and *BET Weekend*, which were created in the mold of *Parade*, *USA Weekend* and other Sunday magazines distributed in daily newspapers.

Introduction

SNS Weekly featured sepia photos “that showcased black society in all its splendor.” *Dawn* proclaimed “a new day for black Americans.” *BET Weekend* told African Americans that it had “just the news you’ve been waiting for.” *Tuesday* strived to spark “a constructive dialogue” between blacks and whites. What these magazine supplements shared was a goal of expanding the readership of daily newspapers and black-owned weeklies.

Inserted in newspapers on Sundays or in time for the weekend, the magazine supplements were often intended to infuse spice into the main paper and provide added value for African-American readers through their design, features, and targeted content. In addition, supplements in daily newspapers served as a window for the general public to see a multifaceted glimpse of the lives of African Americans.

This industry-based description of magazine supplements in the second half of the 20th century seeks to shed light on a little-known segment of the black press. It will highlight leading publications, such as *Tuesday*, *Dawn*, and *BET Weekend*, which were created in the mold of *Parade*, *USA Weekend*, and other Sunday magazines. The research attempts to address the need for the supplements and the challenges of survival.

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Literature Review and Research Questions

Although *Tuesday* was the largest black magazine from the mid-1960s to early 1970s and *BET Weekend* was the second largest at the turn of the millennium, they are virtually non-existent when it comes to scholarly research. However, the same is true for magazine supplements in general. Supplements also receive scant attention in books on the magazine industry or guides on launching magazines, both of which focus on the traditional newsstand-subscription model.

Most literature on supplements appears in trade publications, business magazines, daily newspapers, and industry websites. These media outlets recognize that these magazines are worthy of coverage, given their extensive reach to tens of millions of readers, advertising volume, unique characteristics, and misperceptions. Similarly, these publications are also worthy of scholarly research. The first step, and the purpose of this paper, is to identify and provide industry-based descriptions of black magazine supplements, which will establish a framework for future research.

The appeal of freestanding magazines led to hybrids that were distributed in the full run or select copies of newspapers beginning in the late 19th century. Many hybrids were Sunday magazines, which supplemented the news in their parent newspapers, using feature articles, analysis, literature, photos, illustrations, and other content to attract readers, beat the competition, and generate revenue. Others were syndicated nationwide. In *The Magazine Publishing Industry*, Charles P. Daly, Patrick Henry, and Ellen Ryder offer a definition of supplements consistent with the focus of this research paper: “While their production and distribution are unique, magazine supplements in newspapers are usually considered magazines because their editorial and advertising standards are similar.”¹

When *Life* was reincarnated as a weekly in October 2004, Time Inc. described it as a “newspaper-distributed magazine” rather than a “supplement,” David E. Sumner and Shirrel Rhoades write in *Magazines: A Complete Guide to the Industry*.² Some publishers of “supplements” targeted to African Americans were just as prickly and picky with the words used to label their “newspaper-distributed magazines.”

Sammye Johnson and Patricia Prijatel allude to this outsider status in *The Magazine From Cover to Cover*. In their sole paragraph on Sunday supplements such as *Parade* and *The New York Times Magazine*, they write that “opinions differ on whether these are magazines or not.” Regardless of the editorial quality, they are “simply an added feature” of newspapers, the authors note. “Most magazine professionals, including the MPA, consider them newspaper supplements, rather than independent magazines” (2007, p. 19).³ Until recently, executives of such magazines were denied membership in the American Society of Magazine Editors and Magazine Publisher’s of America. Randi Payton, publisher of *African Americans on Wheels*, was among the first to join MPA.⁴

When people think of the black press, they typically focus on weekly newspapers and often overlook *African Americans on Wheels* and *Tuesday* or even *Ebony* and *Essence*. This is

not surprising, given that newspapers have been far more prolific than magazines and that the black press was born on the pages of a newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, in 1827. A decade later the first black magazine, the *Mirror of Liberty*, appeared. It was published four times between 1837 and 1840. The *National Reformer* had 12 issues from 1838 to 1839, and the *African Methodist Episcopal Church Magazine* came out two years later in 1841.⁵ It would take nearly a century for the debut of what is likely to be the first black supplement, the *SNS Weekly*, published by the *Atlanta World's* Southern Newspaper Syndicate.

In *A History of the Black Press*, Armistead S. Pride and Clint C. Wilson II discuss supplements in the chapter on magazines, radio, and television.⁶ Roland E. Wolseley also has a chapter on magazines in *The Black Press, U.S.A.*, but just a few passages on supplements, focusing primarily on *Dawn*, *Tuesday*, and its spinoff, *Tuesday at Home*.⁷ Neither book mentions the *SNS Weekly*. However, both books along with *Ebony* founder John H. Johnson's autobiography, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, and various articles highlight the goals, advertising obstacles, and business challenges common to all segments of the black press, from newspapers to broadcast outlets to magazines distributed on newsstands, by subscription, or in newspapers.

In giving voice to the voiceless and telling untold stories, many black magazine supplements strived to uphold the legacy of the black press. In the inaugural issue of *Freedom's Journal* on March 16, 1827, according to Pride and Wilson, "the editors announced that to offset any misrepresentations in publications originating from others who 'too long have spoken for us,' often 'to the discredit to any person of colour,' the *Journal* aspired to provide the Negro with his own forum. It said, in short, 'We wish to plead our own cause.'"⁸

While the mission of magazine supplements has been aligned with this long-established credo of the black press, its business sense has been modeled on the aspirations of general-market supplements, or what some might call "the white press." Some black supplements sought the quality of *The New York Times Magazine*, which is virtually on par with many successful newsstand magazines with its highly acclaimed writers, clean design and glossy paper, a mid-2008 circulation of 1.5 million, and four-color, one-page advertising rates of \$107,075.⁹

At the same time, black magazine supplements coveted the reach and advertising power of *Parade* and *USA Weekend*. Among national supplements, *Parade* remains the most prominent with a circulation that has grown from 125,000 copies as a newsstand publication that sold for five cents in 1941 to 32 million dollars as an insert in 2008.¹⁰ Unlike many Sunday magazines, black magazine supplements have the advantage of a built-in niche and often positioned themselves as a niche within a niche, just as The New York Times Company and Parade Publications introduced spinoffs at the turn of the 20th century. Since their debut in 1896, according to media analyst John Morton, Sunday magazines have had a roller coaster history with a bump of about 20 publications after World War II, a peak of 62 in 1972 and a downward trend for the remainder of the 20th century.¹¹ By contrast, this

downward trend coincided with a growth spurt, albeit modest, for black magazine supplements. However, this growth spurt was greatly offset by the difficulty of competing for advertising with *Ebony*, *Essence*, and *Black Enterprise*, as well as general-market media to an even greater extent. This challenge for all black media is well documented by the Media Economic Group, TNS Media Intelligence, *Target Market News*, *Advertising Age*, *Folio*, and others.

Through industry-based descriptions, a history of black magazine supplements, interviews, and analysis of archival records, primary documents and articles, this paper will attempt to address such challenges and answer the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** With so many newspapers, magazines, broadcast outlets, and websites, why were supplements established with black readers as the target audience?
- **RQ2:** What challenges did supplements face that limited their survival?
- **RQ3:** What is the potential outlook for targeted supplements in the 21st century?

The History of Black Supplements

Long before *Tuesday* landed on lawns in daily newspapers, the *Atlanta World* planted the seeds for its existence by publishing the *SNS Weekly*.¹² Founded in 1928 as a weekly, the *Atlanta World* increased its frequency to twice a week in 1930 and three times a week in 1931, when it launched the Southern Newspaper Syndicate (SNS). Through SNS, renamed the Scott Newspaper Syndicate after the founding family, the *Atlanta World* offered printing services and content to about 50 weeklies, including sister papers the *Memphis World* and *Birmingham World*.¹³ SNS members also received the *SNS Weekly*, a four-page, tabloid-size rotogravure supplement that might have been the first of its kind for black readers.¹⁴

Many daily and weekly newspapers shared the same fate as the SNS members; they couldn't afford to start or keep a Sunday magazine. While Scott's clients had the *SNS Weekly*, many mainstream newspapers carried *The American Weekly*, the first nationally syndicated newspaper supplement and an outgrowth of the Sunday magazine published by William Randolph Hearst in the *New York Journal*. (The first Sunday magazine was published by the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1869.) "A significant development in newspaper Sunday magazines, which would turn out to have lasting consequences on newspaper magazines across the country, was in New York City in the late 1800s," Morton noted. "There, a heavily illustrated Sunday magazine became a vital part of the sensationalist competition between Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal*." According to Morton, the *American Weekly* "set the stage for the creation of more syndicated magazines such as *Parade* and *Family Weekly* (which became Gannett's *USA Weekend* in 1985)." Just as the *American Weekly* influenced *SNS Weekly*, *Parade*, and *USA Weekend* would have a similar impact on black magazine supplements that came later.

SNS Weekly had a strong visual quality, like many early supplements and Sunday

magazines that were heavy on photography and illustrations as a vivid and appealing contrast to the gray, text-heavy pages of the newspapers that carried them. For example, *Parade*, published a decade later in 1941, “was packed with photographs left over from *PM*, an experimental New York newspaper produced by Chicago businessman Marshall Field III,” according to a company history. Similarly, *SNS Weekly* featured national news from the *Atlanta World* and sepia photos “that showcased black society in all its splendor,” said managing editor and family member Maria Odum-Hinmon. These pictures included businessmen gathered to board a train for an out-of-town meeting, an award-winning composer, a teacher with degrees from two universities, the “colored representative” for a leading Alabama jeweler, and the six-year-old daughter of an insurance executive.

In an SNS house ad appearing in the Wednesday edition of the *Atlanta World* on December 16, 1931, founder William Alexander Scott II also noted that “we do not publish pictures of Negroes to the exclusion of everything else.”¹⁵ The inside spread of the December 27, 1931, issue of the *SNS Weekly*, for example, includes a photograph of President Herbert Hoover and his cabinet as well as one of 92-year-old John D. Rockefeller, founder of the Standard Oil Company and philanthropist, seated at a golf course in Florida.¹⁶ “No Negro paper anywhere, unless it is published by the Southern Newspaper Syndicate, gives its readers a rotogravure section,” Scott boasted in the *SNS Weekly* house ads and referring to the printing process commonly used for magazines and other pictorials.¹⁷ “The *World’s* rotogravure section is one of the big and exclusive features of papers that stand as leaders and pioneers in Negro journalism.”

National ads placed in the SNS supplement and member newspapers fed the syndicate’s profits, according Odum-Hinmon. The success of the supplement also contributed to the *Atlanta World* becoming the nation’s first black daily in 1932. With the increase in frequency, the paper changed its name to the *Atlanta Daily World*.

In 1945 John P. Davis proposed a larger syndication effort called *Our World*.¹⁸ His plan was to take on *Ebony*, the five-month-old successor to the *Negro Digest* that John H. Johnson billed as a black version of *Life* magazine.¹⁹ Davis gave copies of an eight-page prototype of *Our World* and a prospectus to black newspaper owners attending the annual conference of the National Newspaper Publishers Association. His plan to launch a national

supplement failed, because of the publishers' concerns about compromising their ties to national advertisers, appetite for a healthy slice of *Our World's* advertising pie, and preference for niche publications tailored to their respective audiences.²⁰ By contrast, such issues did not hamper the efforts of W.A. Scott. Many SNS publishers were less established than the NNPA members whom Davis approached. Some couldn't afford to print their papers, let alone a supplement. Additionally, Scott encouraged his SNS members to focus more on circulation than advertising in his instructional pamphlet:

*It is highly important that you fix it clearly in your mind that circulation income is much superior to advertising income, because it can be depended upon week in and week out. Twelve or fifteen advertisers will quit much quicker than four or five hundred subscribers. I attribute my success with the "ATLANTA DAILY WORLD," our only Negro daily, to the fact that I have always depended upon three-fourths of my income from circulation and one-fourth from advertising. Therefore, after four years of successful experience depending upon income from circulation, I am in position to highly recommend it.*²¹

Undeterred by the NNPA publishers' lack of interest in his venture, Davis published *Our World* as a freestanding pictorial that was well received by readers for a decade. "It was to *Ebony* as *Look* magazine was to *Life*," recalls C. Gerald Fraser, who worked at the *Amsterdam News* in Harlem and later the *New York Daily News* and *The New York Times*. "It was a more substantial, progressive publication than *Ebony*."²²

"*Our World* kept me up more nights than any other publication," said Johnson, calling Davis "brilliant" and admitting that *Ebony* was "locked in a life-and-death struggle" with its formidable foe.²³ By October 24, 1955, however, *Our World* was bankrupt and \$200,000 in the red. Johnson put the final nail in the coffin by purchasing the rival magazine's name and assets for \$14,000.

While Davis was unsuccessful in launching a supplement, and ultimately in sustaining *Our World* as a freestanding magazine, he had successfully planted a seed in the minds of many NNPA members. Several publishers started supplements, such as the eponymous *Afro-American*. The *Afro's* 12-page tabloid offered general-interest articles such as "Napoleon Should Weep for Selling Louisiana." Non-SNS papers that had fewer resources often carried inserts such as *Tone* or the *National Scene* and the *Weekly Feature Magazine*, both from Continental Features of New York.²⁴

By 1955 the *Atlanta Daily World* had discontinued its printing services for SNS, because of cutbacks in Georgia's train schedule, which disrupted distribution, as well as delinquent payments by some papers. The Memphis and Birmingham papers were sold in 1970 and 1987, respectively, and are defunct. In 2008 the *Atlanta Daily World* carried a quarterly book supplement called *Written* and had inserted *Celebration of Books* for two years, said M. Alexis Scott, publisher, chief executive officer, and granddaughter of founder W.A. Scott II. What follows are industry profiles of the late-century offspring of the *Atlanta Daily World's* SNS *Weekly* and other early supplements.

Industry Profiles

Tuesday: A Powerhouse in Print

The most ambitious venture during the second half of the 20th century came from W. Leonard Evans, Jr., who used his advertising expertise to develop two widely distributed inserts as president and editor of Tuesday Publications Inc. In a nod to the black press, Evans named his magazine *Tuesday*, typically the production day for many black newspapers. However, he sought an integrated audience, claiming that *Tuesday* wasn't a "Negro supplement" just as he insisted that *Parade* wasn't a "white supplement."²⁵ Evans wanted to mimic *Parade*'s mass appeal and advertising revenue.

In September 1965 *Tuesday* made its debut in general-market newspapers in cities with large black populations, such as the *Washington Sunday Star*, *New York Journal American*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*. The publication appeared primarily on Tuesdays or Sundays. Distribution was based on Zip codes where black readers lived, as well as predominantly white suburbs and integrated areas. Evans claimed that 15 percent of *Tuesday*'s readers were white. "We're not interested in a social crusade," Evans explained in an interview with *Time* magazine, "but we want to start a constructive dialogue."

Tuesday launched in 10 newspapers with a reported 1.4 million copies compared with *Ebony*'s circulation of 725,000, according to *Time* magazine. John H. Johnson claimed that *Ebony* actually sold 900,000 copies monthly in late 1965, also its 20th anniversary.²⁶ In addition, *Tuesday* added distribution on black colleges to expand its national reach to appease advertisers, said Byron Lewis, advertising director for *Tuesday* and founder of the UniWorld advertising agency.²⁷ The first issue included topics ranging from four Harvard-educated lawyers in Chicago to opera singer Marian Anderson's home life. "Newspapers have too long given a negative picture of Negroes," Evans said. "We want to provide a balanced picture."²⁸

NNPA board member Ofield Dukes said that Evans succeeded in that regard with *Tuesday* and *Tuesday at Home*, which was introduced in 1973. "They were well read and well done," said Dukes, former assistant editor of the *Michigan Chronicle*, a black weekly, before joining the Johnson-Humphrey administration in 1964. In addition to being informative, the magazines also served their "commercial purpose," added the president of Ofield Dukes & Associates in Washington, D.C.²⁹ Cover lines on the May 1971 issue of *Tuesday at Home*

included “The Queen of Sheba: Her Legacy for Women Today,” “A Prescription for School Health Programs,” “The Black Jockeys: They Rode to Win” and “African Landmarks Highlight Afro-American Fashions” for an outdoor photo spread.

By the end of 1973, the magazines had a combined circulation of 4.6 million with distribution in 23 newspapers. Tuesday Publications was hailed as a success, ranking 29th among the top 100 black businesses in the United States and second among the ninth largest communication companies with gross revenues of 6.1 million dollars. Nevertheless, as the seventies came to a close, so did the Tuesday magazines.³⁰ Tuesday was ahead of its time, and advertising remained a challenge, Lewis explained.

Dawn: A New Day for the Black Press

The success of *Tuesday* at its peak captured the attention of many entrepreneurs. In 1973, the same year in which *Tuesday at Home* made its debut and contributed to its parent company’s boast of 4.6 million circulation, *Dawn* magazine was born. It quickly became a major supplement offering editorial content by and about black people. Like the *SNS Weekly*, *Dawn* focused on black-owned newspapers while the *Tuesday* publications concentrated on general-market dailies.

“*Dawn* was my idea,” said the late Frances L. Murphy II, former publisher and chief executive officer of her family’s *Afro-American* chain. Murphy proposed the publication during a meeting with Kenneth Wilson, vice president of advertising, as they brainstormed ways to boost revenue at the *Afro*, she explained in a 1992 interview for the Women in Journalism oral history project of the Washington Press Club Foundation. “For years we had had our own little magazine in our newspaper, but not a slick, that could be offered to other newspapers.”

Her cousin, John H. Murphy III, who was then editor, spent months meeting with black publishers around the country.³¹ Thirty agreed to carry *Dawn*, and large advertisers were responsive to the supplement’s rate base of half-million readers. In its inaugural issue in April 1973, *Dawn* proclaimed “a new day for black Americans.” Its editor was Art Carter, and writers included legendary journalist Sam Yette, who wrote about President Richard Nixon’s budget. *Dawn* debuted as a quarterly, appearing in April, June, November and December.³² It went monthly in 1974. The insert eventually reached a circulation of 900,000 and expanded from 16 to 48 pages.

Frances Murphy, who had previously served as chairman of the board, said the *Afro* was in financial trouble, as were many black newspapers as the civil rights movement drew to a close and integration began transforming the social and business landscape. Born with ink in her veins as the granddaughter of founder and former slave John Murphy, Sr., and daughter of one of his 10 children, Carl Murphy, she was determined to help the family business make a smooth transition from the third to fourth generation. She pushed hard, sometimes unsuccessfully, to execute her strategic vision to protect the *Afro*, founded in 1892. Her father and his heirs controlled roughly a third of the stock, and she took

advantage of this power. In addition to launching *Dawn*, Murphy pushed some of the elders into retirement to make room for fresh blood, strengthened the pension plan, increased the employee loan program, fired dead weight, raised the journalistic metabolism of the staff throughout the chain, and negotiated union contracts ahead of time.

However, her expansion plan, which called for retooling and the purchase of a new printing press, fell on deaf ears. Initiatives such as *Dawn* were welcomed, but not those that required personal belt-tightening. Nevertheless, Murphy made financial inroads. When she took over, revenue for the 1970-71 fiscal year was 2.3 million dollars. By the time she stepped down it was 4 million dollars for 1973-74, including ad sales from *Dawn*. "We were going to go public and go onto the stock exchange, and that's how we were going to finance the expansion," Murphy recalled. "I don't know what happened, but when we came up with the vote, I didn't win. That's when I left."

Although she had been re-elected, she decided to step down. Her cousin, John, became chairman of the board in 1974 and eventually added the title of publisher. Thanks to *Dawn*, revenues continued to grow, reaching 6 million dollars in the early 1980s, with \$200,000 in profits. But the Afro-American Newspaper Company began to experience ad losses of \$30,000 a year, because of *Dawn's* heavy reliance on cigarette and liquor advertising, which began to evaporate. In 1979 alone, Phillip Morris USA, the nation's largest tobacco company, spent \$189,998 on ads in *Dawn*, while the *National Black Monitor* received less than a third of this figure.³³ Murphy faced the tough decision of ending the Newark, Philadelphia and even national editions. By the end of the eighties, *Dawn* was no more. To maintain national advertising, he started a 30,000-circulation tabloid called *Every Wednesday*, which was opposed by the editorial staff. Originally a shelter title featuring home improvements and food, *Every Wednesday* eventually began focusing on entertainment.

BET Weekend: A Successor to Tuesday

*BET Weekend** picked up where *Tuesday* and *Dawn* left off, with distribution in both daily newspapers and black-owned weeklies. The idea was hatched in 1994 during a meeting between Robert L. Johnson, founder of Black Entertainment Television, and Fred Drasner, CEO and co-publisher of the *New York Daily News*. Johnson initially sought out the daily as an investor for his newsmagazine *Emerge*. Instead, Drasner suggested that the two companies collaborate on a new venture. They decided that a Sunday magazine would marry BET's deep penetration into black America through its cable network, magazines, and other properties, with the *Daily News's* extensive distribution network for its portfolio of ethnic supplements, ranging from *Viva* to *Kwanzaa*. Both companies were enticed by *Parade's* and *USA Weekend's* circulation and advertising numbers. Each had sizable audiences that made making even a dent into those numbers plausible. BET became the majority partner, with a 51 percent stake of the business and editorial control; the *News* handled printing and

* In the interest of full disclosure, Yanick Rice Lamb was founding editor of *BET Weekend* and an editor at the *New York Times*.

distribution; and both companies shared responsibility for ad sales and other business operations.³⁴

The BET team envisioned a hybrid of the mega-supplements and upscale consumer magazines. The founders originally proposed an oversized four-color glossy called *BET Sunday* that would be more like *The New York Times Magazine* and less like the *Daily News* supplements, which were also four color but tended to be primarily advertising vehicles published on newsprint. The long-term goal was to publish weekly, but in the meantime the magazine would come out on the first Sunday of the month. The founding editors believed that this schedule would be easy for many readers to remember, since the first Sunday was the busiest day at most Protestant churches and the time of the month when communion was served. They figured that word-of-mouth and pass-along readership would be at its highest on first Sundays. Despite the Sunday strategy, the launch team changed the name to *BET Weekend* since most black weeklies published on Thursdays and not on Sundays like their daily counterparts. At one point, *USA Weekend* complained that *BET Weekend* was too similar to its name and that it would create confusion in the marketplace. As a result, BET added periods to the magazine's original logo to make it clear that B.E.T. stood for Black Entertainment Television. The founders also scaled down the trim size to conform with the other BET magazines—*Emerge*, *YSB: Young Sisters and Brothers*, and later *Heart & Soul*—to achieve efficiency in terms of production, paper costs, and group advertising buys.

During the first year as a quarterly in 1996, distribution was 800,000 in dailies such as the *Washington Post* and the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* as well as weeklies that included the *Michigan Chronicle* and the *Washington Informer*. The magazine was zoned to areas that were at least 50 percent black. The targeted reader was 25 to 45 years old with an income of at least \$35,000. Charter advertisers included American Express and Home Box Office (HBO).³⁵

“We’re proud to be included in this venture,” Denise Rolark Barnes, publisher of the *Informer*, said at the time. “We are sure it will be well-received by our readers throughout the Washington area. However, I can only hope that it will further demonstrate to advertisers the value of the black press as a viable medium through which to market to the black community.”³⁶

Circulation grew from 800,000 to 1.3 million in three years, making it the second-largest black magazine behind *Ebony*, which had a circulation of 1.8 million. (By contrast, *Tuesday* eclipsed *Ebony* at the outset with a instant circulation of 1.4 million to *Ebony*'s 1965 circulation of 900,000, which took two decades to build.) Readers responded favorably to *BET Weekend*'s content, which focused on lifestyles, arts, and entertainment, as well as the ease of reading a magazine in its entirety. The 24- to 56-page magazine included a range of short articles, departments, and digests, none of which exceeded three or four pages.³⁷ Bob Johnson also insisted upon including a crossword puzzle, a staple of Sunday magazines. The cover of the inaugural issue in February 1996 featured Oscar-nominated actress Angela Bassett from the blockbuster film *Waiting to Exhale* instead of the media-saturated singer Whitney Houston. Articles inside ranged from a profile of Harlem Renaissance author Dorothy West at her home on Martha's Vineyard to an essay by legal expert Derrick Bell on the anniversary of Plessy v. Ferguson. Some African Americans landed their first magazine covers as a result of *BET Weekend*. They included such as actors Morgan Freeman, Terrence Howard, and Jamie Foxx; brain surgeon Dr. Ben Carson; and authors Walter Mosley and Toni Morrison. The magazine won several awards for design and editorial.

In preparation for its sale to Viacom, BET began streamlining the company and gave control of the magazine division to Vanguard Media Inc. in 1999. VMI preferred the traditional newsstand-subscription business model over newspaper distribution. After shutting down *Emerge*, the new company shifted *BET Weekend*'s staff and resources to launch *Savoy*, a title billed as "a black *Vanity Fair*" that had been originally proposed at Time Inc. The last issue of *BET Weekend*, its largest, was published shortly before its fifth anniversary in May 2000.

Niches Within a Niche: From African Americans on Wheels to Caribbeat

In 1995 Randi Payton founded *African American On Wheels* as a magazine supplement with a companion website. His goal was to offer relevant automotive news to consumers while educating the auto industry. "When we started, there was very little awareness in the auto industry regarding the actual buying power of black consumers," said Payton, president of On Wheels Inc. "There was very little valid research on African-American car buyers."³⁸

Payton initially distributed 500,000 copies of *African American On Wheels* as a 12- to 16-page supplement in 30 black weeklies. It soon grew to 32 pages.³⁹ Named as one of *Folio*'s "Top 40 Influencers in the Magazine Industry" in 2006, he later introduced *Asians On Wheels* and *Latinos On Wheels*, adding digital components for each in early 2008. Payton also started On Wheels Automotive News Service (OWNS), which reached more than 700 publications.⁴⁰

Other niche publications in the 20th century included

Suburban Styles, *Jubilee*, and *Black Family Today*. One year after the successful debut of *BET Weekend*, the *New York Daily News* introduced *Caribbeat Monthly* as a spinoff of Jared McCallister's popular, 16-year-old "Caribbeat" newspaper column. The publication was distributed in 400,000 zoned editions around New York and placed at select newsstands and commuter stops.⁴¹

Since *BET Weekend* focused on urban areas, *Suburban Styles* targeted bedroom communities in upstate New York. It was distributed to a dozen papers owned by Gannett, which also publishes *USA Today*.⁴² The name was later changed to *City & Suburban Styles*. The winter/spring 1999 issue bearing the new name featured former *Essence* editor Susan L. Taylor on the cover with other articles on film, art, mutual funds, and travel. A disclaimer on the cover labeled it as an "advertising supplement to *The New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*" and noted that it was not prepared with the staffs of either paper. Many daily newspapers were concerned about clearly stating that they had no involvement in preparing the content of independent supplements. Some required magazines to print "advertising supplement" on the covers, even specifying the position, minimum point size, and sufficient contrast between the colors of the typeface and background. The founders of *BET Weekend* refused to print the words "advertising supplement" on its cover, claiming that the phrase was best suited for advertising circulars, not journalistic enterprises. As a compromise, the magazine printed "special supplement" along the bottom left side of the cover.

In August 1997 the Alliance Media Group launched *Jubilee*, a family-oriented supplement. *Jubilee* had a circulation of 55,000, mostly through selected *Baltimore Sun* ZIP codes on the last Sunday of the month, with the rest going to churches and libraries. (*BET Weekend* appeared in the *Sun* on the first Sunday of the month.) Times-Mirror was then the parent company of Alliance and the *Sun*.⁴³

Black Family Today was also published by a major newspaper chain. Sentinel Publishing, a division of the *Orlando Sentinel*, which was then owned by the Tribune Company, published the magazine from 1995 to 2001. Sentinel Publishing distributed 20,000 copies of *Black Family Today* on a bimonthly basis on newsstands, racks, and other outlets in central Florida.⁴⁴

HealthQuest: From Newsstand to Newspaper

Another niche within a niche was *HealthQuest*. In 1997, after four years of newsstand and subscription sales, *HealthQuest* shifted to newspaper distribution.⁴⁵ Similarly, *Parade* was initially on the newsstand for two months in 1941 before being inserted in newspapers. Time Inc. also took that route in October 2004 when it resurrected *Life* magazine for the second time by distributing it through newspapers to build instant circulation.⁴⁶ Sara Lomax-Reese, publisher of *HealthQuest*, was also seeking a circulation boost—along with increased advertising revenue and stability. Circulation grew from 20,000 copies when it launched in January 1993 to 100,000 on the newsstand. Lomax-Reese instantly reached "the magic number" of 500,000 with the switch to newspapers, capturing advertisers' attention while

avoiding the cost of direct mail for traditional circulation drives.

“We were not very focused on advertising in the beginning,” Lomax-Reese admitted. The daughter of a Philadelphia physician, Lomax-Reese launched the magazine as a labor of love and with a mission to help reduce health disparities. “At *HealthQuest*, educating people is our reason for being,” Lomax-Reese wrote in her publisher’s letter in the fifth anniversary issue in February 1998. “There’s nothing more important than our physical, mental, spiritual and emotional well being, because without it, we have nothing.” That issue also included “The State of Black Health,” featuring former Secretary of Health and Human Services Louis Sullivan, M.D.⁴⁷

While newsstand and subscription sales kept the magazine afloat in the early years, Lomax-Reese knew that she would have to make changes to ensure the growth and longevity essential to carrying out her mission. In addition to moving *HealthQuest* inside of audited daily and weekly newspapers, Lomax-Reese used a grassroots strategy to distribute copies through churches, community centers and medical offices. She also bolstered the magazine’s message and visibility by increasing its interactivity through the Web, community outreach, books and events. The tradeoff of the distribution change meant dropping the page count from an average of 84, down to 44 or 32 pages. However, she retained the quality and integrity of the publication, which continued to be printed on a four-color, glossy paper stock, but with a self-cover

Being able to verify a five-fold increase in circulation “was a good story” to tell advertisers, Lomax-Reese recalled. “We were getting real traction with advertisers at that point, especially in terms of trust and our ability to deliver the audience.” As a result, ad sales rose to roughly one million dollars.

“We were on the cusp of breaking even and getting to solvency when 9/11 happened,” Lomax-Reese explained. “The advertising market dried up after 9/11—at least it did for us.” She suspended publication in early 2002, but later published a health guide. She still hosts and produces a radio program called “HealthQuest Live!”

The Challenge of Upholding the Legacy of the Black Press

The need for a black press, including magazine supplements, has remained strong since the days of *Freedom’s Journal* “mainly because all the old battles have not yet been won and because there are so many new ones,” Wolseley said. “The black press was the only one

reporting the news of black America; except for crime there was almost no news of it in the white press.”⁴⁸ Wolseley’s comment succinctly answers **RQ1**: *With so many newspapers, magazines, broadcast outlets, and websites, why were supplements established with black readers as the target audience?*

While the black press is no longer the “only one” focusing on African Americans, coverage is still spotty and often predictable. Mainstream magazines feature more African Americans on covers, but they tend to be the usual suspects who are considered “safe” or have achieved cross-over success. This includes Halle Berry, Denzel Washington, Will Smith, Oprah Winfrey, Tiger Woods, and Queen Latifah. Black magazine supplements covered such figures too, but they also highlighted undiscovered talent and everyday people who did extraordinary things. *Suburban Styles* featured a piece on an investment banker who restored Villa Lewaro, the upstate New York mansion of entrepreneur and philanthropist Madame C.J. Walker, while *HealthQuest* delved into sickle cell anemia, diabetes, and other conditions that disproportionately affect African Americans.

The founders of supplements have shared the same convictions as the founders of *Freedom’s Journal* who set out to offset misrepresentations in mainstream media, provide a forum for their readers, and “plead our own cause.”⁴⁹ They were responding to the same demand that *Ebony*’s founder experienced: “My problem was not the editorial content of the magazine—the readers were yelling for more,” Johnson said.⁵⁰ “My problem was not circulation—I couldn’t print enough copies. My problem was advertising or, to come right out with it, the lack of advertising.” (Also see “A Business Model Based on Newspaper Distribution.”)

The founders of black magazine supplements also knew and lived the “findings” of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, appointed by U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson to study urban rebellions during the mid-1960s. Known as the Kerner Commission after its chairman, Illinois Governor Otto Kerner, the 11-member group issued a 1968 report that warned “our nation is moving towards two societies—one white, one black—separate and unequal.”

The Kerner Report placed a large share of the blame in the hands of the media for failing to provide fair and balanced coverage of not only the uprisings but also the everyday lives of black citizens. The report also criticized the existence of lily-white media organizations with few if any black journalists on the front lines and in decision-making positions.

Both the riots and the report led newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and television networks to increase their hiring of black journalists and coverage of black America. This was done out of necessity and embarrassment. Diversity became an industry goal for newspapers. In the late sixties and early seventies, many newspapers turned to *Tuesday* and *Tuesday at Home* as key pieces in helping to solve the puzzle of race relations. By 1978, diversity officially became part of the mission of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, founded in 1922. ASNE set a goal of achieving “parity” by the turn of the century.

This meant that the percentage of minority journalists in newsrooms would mirror their representation in the U.S. population by the year 2000 and that newspapers would take a closer look at coverage, story placement, photo usage and ancillary products. This also meant that many newspapers welcomed supplements like *HealthQuest*, *BET Weekend*, *Suburban Styles*, *Jubilee*, and *African Americans on Wheels*. Media companies discovered that it made journalistic and business sense to pay more attention to African Americans. This is partly why the *New York Daily News* syndicated its own line of black and Hispanic supplements, such as the Kwanzaa insert, developed *Caribbeat*, and entered into the partnership to launch *BET Weekend*.

In its mission statement, promotional materials and media kit, *BET Weekend* touted its presence as “a welcome addition to an underserved market” and its “culturally relevant” content as being just the news readers have been waiting for. One reader said, “I’m happy to say that I’ve finally opened up the newspaper to great news.” Another wrote, “This magazine is a breath of fresh air.”⁵¹ Similarly, *HealthQuest* took the same approach with its health content, as did *Jubilee* with its focus on family and educational issues.

Still, many lamented that following the civil rights movement, black magazines and newspapers lacked the advocacy and bite of their predecessors. “The black press was integration’s collateral damage, but the damage was self-inflicted,” C. Gerald Fraser said (2008). As black magazines and newspapers gained increasing competition from general-market publications, they too began placing greater emphasis on delivering the audience and advertising-friendly content that would generate revenue and ensure their survival. For the early black press, it was primarily about the reader. For its offspring, it was about the reader *and* the advertiser to a greater extent.

While the black press had fearlessly withstood lynching threats, bombings, fires, distribution problems, ad cancellations, and other crises, mid-century challenges included aging owners whose convictions weren’t shared to the same degree by their successors, rising publishing costs, dwindling readership, and governmental pressure. “In the 20th century, the discrimination sometimes has been more subtle, depriving publications of advertisers, interfering with their distribution and ignoring their existence as a force in society,” Wolseley said.⁵² Some observers saw a turning point during the era of McCarthyism. Fraser noted that some black publications “lost their way” in the late 1950s. “The publishers somehow became less interested in black news and, more importantly, the black perspective,” he said. “The anti-Communist purges of the period frightened many black publishers, and they gradually settled for the revenue they were pulling in and decided not to make any waves—real waves.”

Against this backdrop, black magazines of the 20th century and beyond have attempted a multi-pronged focus on their stated editorial mission, the bottom line, the legacy of the black press to widely varying degrees, and the inherent qualities of being a magazine. Unlike their general-market counterparts, black magazines often have the added pressure of being measured by their commitment to upholding the legacy of the black press and serving

the black community with an independent voice that speaks without fear or favor. Their ability or interest in meeting these expectations don't always mesh nicely with the goals of striving for financial success to ensure survival and of serving a niche audience, especially a niche within a niche. How much bite and advocacy can be expected from the publisher of a travel magazine, for instance? And can its mission come anywhere close to that of a *Freedom's Journal*?

"Magazines have been the medium of our country's brightest minds and have provided a forum for some of our most important political social, and cultural discussion," Sammye Johnson and Patricia Prijatel wrote in *The Magazine From Cover to Cover*. "In recent year, however, magazine professionals as well as critics outside the industry have bemoaned some magazines' tendencies toward advertiser influence on content, tabloidization, celebrity journalism, and an overall appeal to our basest instincts." The medium is "as individualistic as the Americans it serves," the authors add. "Advertisers look at demographics and psychographics and match them with the characteristics of the target audience for their products."⁵³

Randi Payton has successfully used this approach with *African Americans on Wheels*, *Asians on Wheels* and *Latinos on Wheels* not only to appeal to the respective readers but also to attract advertisers from Chrysler to Jaguar.⁵⁴ For better or worse, the targeted content in supplements relieves dailies of the pressure of trying to go deep on certain issues within the newspaper while still being able to provide a service to their readers. Ross Settles, vice president for marketing and communications when the *Baltimore Sun* was publishing *Jubilee*, said that it made more sense to run certain family and education stories in the magazine rather than the newspaper and that *Jubilee* was the right place for the right demographic of African-American professionals. "It's a targeted product, and people are spending targeted dollars against it," Settles said.⁵⁵

A Business Model Based on Newspaper Distribution

As a business model, Payton said it was "definitely easier to launch a magazine as an insert." Like Lomax-Reese of *HealthQuest*, he appreciated the ability to build the desired circulation to attract automotive advertisers, along with the savings on direct-mail promotions, postage, and newsstand expenses. This is offset, of course, by insertion costs and the lack of income from readers. For example, *BET Weekend* paid the *Daily News* \$90,000 per issue in insertion costs for more than 300,000 copies, but the gross rate for a four-color page of advertising was \$35,000 in 1998.⁵⁶ Advertising is the primary revenue stream for magazine supplements, and sales results can be surprisingly low or high. "We did better than we expected on the advertising on the first issue," Settles said of *Jubilee*.⁵⁷

Demand for *BET Weekend* was high (RQ1). More papers wanted to carry it, and more readers wanted to read it. In fact, a reader named Sam Jackson, like the actor, visited the *Chicago Sun-Times* each month to pick up a copy of *BET Weekend*—without the newspaper. To control expenses, BET took a cautious approach in adding newspapers so that circulation didn't grow too quickly. Nevertheless, circulation grew 38 percent, from 800,000 to 1.3 million in just three years.

While BET made some newspapers wait to begin carrying the magazine, it responded to reader demand for copies outside of the distribution zones with a newsstand test. "We did it because people kept asking us for the magazine,"⁵⁸ said Clarence Brown, vice president of operations at BET Holdings Inc. and associate publisher. "We've had more and more people see our commercial on the BET channel, and contact us about getting the magazine."⁵⁹

In August 1997 *BET Weekend* tested an expanded version of that issue with a heavier and glossier cover stock. It put 70,000 copies on the newsstand using the bipad number of its sibling *Emerge*, which had a combined July/August issue. After a successful test, the company launched *BET Weekend* on newsstands at 99 cents a copy.⁶⁰ It was polybagged with a music compilation CD⁶¹ in a split run with author Toni Morrison on some covers upon release of *Paradise* and filmmaker Spike Lee on the remaining issues pegged to his HBO documentary *Four Little Girls* about the fatal church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, during the sixties. The price was a hit with readers, but too low for some newsstand operators who sold the magazine for four times as much in some cases. BET raised the price to \$1.25 in December and added more pages, essentially publishing two versions of each issue — a larger one for newsstands and a smaller one for newspaper distribution. It discontinued the newsstand run after a year but continued distribution through newspapers.⁶²

Surviving the Challenges

The downside to newspaper distribution includes the perception that all Sunday magazines, supplements, inserts, and fillers are created equally. This lies at the root of **RQ2**: *What challenges did supplements face that limited their survival?*

Supplements have always had an image problem, because of their distribution method, appearance, and "throwaway factor." People, including advertisers, are accustomed to the look and feel of newsstand magazines with thick glossy covers, perfect binding, and a higher number of pages. Although size matters, magazine supplements have to meet the "flop test" in being light and flexible enough so that they can stay in newspapers long enough to reach the homes of consumers. It's also a matter of cost. The bigger the supplement, the higher the paper costs, printing expenses, and insertion fees. Although *BET Weekend* was skinny compared with *Emerge*, *Heart & Soul*, or *YSB*, for example, it consumed far more paper at just 24, 36, or 48 pages, because its circulation exceeded a million copies while none of the other three topped 300,000.

"It really started to kill me when people began to call *HealthQuest* an insert," Lomax-Reese said. "I don't think people really understand how much work is involved. It's an

incredible labor of love to do a publication that comes out with any kind of frequency.” That’s one reason why larger magazine supplements like *The New York Times Sunday Magazine* and *Life* and smaller ones like *HealthQuest* and *BET Weekend* paid so much attention to design, photojournalism, writing, and editing. Still, *Life* as a supplement lacked the visual impact of *Life* on newsstands.

Some advertisers were concerned about the loyalty of readers who received magazine supplements as a “bonus” instead of paying for them directly. Many publishers countered that some readers paid for the newspapers just to get their magazines, not to mention the Sam Jacksons of the world who were willing to pay—and leave the newspapers behind.

The proliferation of advertising circulars and coupons in Sunday papers didn’t help. Lomax-Reese found herself trying to convince advertisers that readers really looked for *HealthQuest* and that they wouldn’t inadvertently discard it along with sales literature. “They started discounting our ad rate because of the throwaway factor,” she said of the wary advertisers. That’s why she implemented a grassroots distribution strategy to augment the newspaper distribution, requiring churches, community centers, and other venues to pay for shipping costs to prove that they really wanted the magazine. Over time, she was able to quell concerns about the demand for and reach of *HealthQuest*.

Some advertisers expressed concerns not only about *whether* publishers reached certain readers but also *who* was being reached in a mass environment of newspapers, even with the use of ZIP codes and even with audits. “We do know we’re getting who we want,” Bob Johnson said of *BET Weekend*. “We do know we’re reaching a target audience of black readers. And we don’t mind reaching those who are not black readers.”⁶³ Leonard Evans expressed similar sentiments about *Tuesday* and *Tuesday at Home*.

Another challenge with audits involves having smaller publications as part of the distribution mix. Audits of syndicated magazines can be time-consuming and are built on audits of each paper that carries them. Dailies and larger weeklies tend to have audited circulations, but this isn’t always the case with smaller newspapers. *HealthQuest* and *BET Weekend* found themselves discontinuing partnerships with weekly newspapers that were unable or unwilling to be audited.

The pursuit of advertising can also be an issue. Newspapers are often concerned about advertising conflicts with the magazines they carry. Some want a piece of a magazine’s ad revenue in lieu of all or part of the insertion fee. *Life* and the McClatchy newspaper chain worked out contracts to prevent advertising conflicts. With the 70 newspapers that signed on to carry *Life*, Time Inc. arranged “distribution based on paying a fee, getting paid a fee or having no financial transaction,” according to *Editor & Publisher*.⁶⁴

Advertising was also an issue between general-market publications and black-owned weeklies. Publishers of the smaller newspapers complained that the larger ones were siphoning off their advertising business by delivering black readers. The charges were exacerbated if the general-market publications had poor relationships with segments of their

audience and/or employees. For example, some NNPA members were initially split on whether to carry and support *BET Weekend* because of the involvement of the *New York Daily News* and to a lesser degree because of the controversial music videos aired on Black Entertainment Television. Opponents felt that the *Daily News* was capitalizing on the black audience at their expense, and they accused the newspaper of discriminatory employment practices, union busting, and insensitive coverage. At the heart of their concerns were the three-million-dollar discrimination settlement with four African-American journalists and the use of non-union workers during labor disputes.

When *Jubilee* ad reps went out on sales calls, they were reportedly questioned whether the *Baltimore Sun* really had a relationship with African Americans. John Oliver, Jr., publisher of the *Afro-American* newspapers, also wondered whether readers would “trust the *Sun* in blackface” through *Jubilee*. “I wouldn’t,” he said. Oliver also worried that the *Sun*’s circulation was a “giant pipeline” with which smaller companies could not compete.

“I’m pleased that the African-American market is being recognized as a viable economic entity, but obviously I am concerned about the intrusion of the *Sun* with all its muscle,” he said. “It gives me pause. We’ve been trying to get advertisers to recognize the African-American market for years, without much success.”⁶⁵

That the African-American market is recognized at all is a testament to the tenacity of publishers of black newspapers and the big three black magazines: *Ebony*, *Essence*, and *Black Enterprise*. Many people single out John H. Johnson in particular for leveling the playing field a bit as founder of the Johnson Publishing Company, which published not only *Ebony*, *Jet* and *Negro Digest*, but also *Hue*, *Tan*, *Ebony Man*, and *Ebony Jr.* at various points in its history.

“There is no question that when Johnson launched *Ebony* in 1945, he altered the face of the magazine industry for good,” said George Curry, syndicated columnist and former editor-in-chief of *Emerge* magazine, the NNPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com. “Johnson forced major corporations to advertise with black publications and insisted that they use black models and advertising agencies.”⁶⁶

Johnson said that he “had to convince corporations and advertising executives that there was an untapped, underdeveloped black consumer market larger and more affluent than some of the white foreign markets.”⁶⁷ He even went on joint sales calls with the publishers of *Essence* and *Black Enterprise*. Johnson also met with industry titans without sales pitches to educate, heal race relations, explain the social unrest of the sixties, network, socialize, and form lasting ties. The pioneer became so influential that he received a Presidential Medal of Freedom as well as top honors from MPA and advertising and business halls of fame. Johnson’s actions and acclaim contributed to *Ebony*’s dominance as the No. 1 black magazine for more than a half-century. In every segment of the black press, publishers have longed for a piece of that success.

“Even with the success of *Ebony*, there was still the question mark of the viability of the black media and the black market,” lamented Ed Lewis, co-founder of *Essence*.⁶⁸

Advertisers devote a tiny share of their advertising budgets to special markets, including African-American, Latino, and Asian audiences. The Minority Media and Telecom Council puts the figure at 1 percent overall.⁶⁹ Even though Johnson was supportive and served as a role model for entrepreneurs, he was always competitive with so many hands reaching out for the same slice of the advertising pie. “Many advertisers think that there are only four ways to reach the African American audience: ‘The Tom Joyner Show,’ BET, *Essence* and *Ebony/Jet*,” said Al Anderson, president of Anderson Communications Inc. in Atlanta. “There are a host of other vehicles.”⁷⁰

Conclusion

What is the potential outlook for targeted supplements in the 21st century? (RQ3) The outlook is mixed. The right supplement in the right hands at the right time and under the right circumstances could obviously do well. The magazine menu isn’t as comprehensive for African Americans as it is for the general public, black readers still complain about coverage and Johnson’s characterization of an “untapped, underdeveloped black consumer market” still rings true. However, magazine supplements depend on what many consider a corpse or, at the very least, a body on life support — the daily newspaper. Throw in the throwaway factor, sketchy advertising prospects plus other challenges unique to supplements and you don’t have an ideal business proposition, but anything is possible.

According to MPA, 85 black magazines were launched between 2002 and 2006. MPA also points so many strengths in its 2008 “African-American/Black Market Profiles,” such as:

- Buying power that will exceed one trillion dollars in 2012.
- High magazine readership of 86 percent, with African Americans reading 11 issues a month compared with eight issues for the general public.
- Faster-than-average population growth that is expected to rise 6.7 percent from 2007 to 2012.

The first decade of the new millennium was partly a period of growth for some supplements. Payton started *On Wheels* for the Asian and Hispanic markets; *Homes of Color* launched as a supplement before going on newsstands; and *Black Issues Book Review* contemplated a name change and switch from newsstands to newspaper distribution. In the general market, the successful spinoffs of *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*, notably *T*, prompted such ventures as *WSJ* from *The Wall Street Journal*. And Jungle Media offered titles for the college market along the lines of supplements produced by other companies during spring break.

As the decade drew to a close, however, magazines increasingly faced new challenges with the downturn in the newspaper industry. The Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism noted that newspaper advertising revenue declined 16 percent in 2008 and that some newspapers lost one million dollars a week the following year. "By the end of 2009," the Pew Research Center reported, "the newsrooms of American daily newspapers may employ roughly 25 percent fewer people than in 2001."⁷¹

Bretland Moore, publisher of *Soulful*, distributed by the Tribune Company, said that while the magazine supplement did well, he would have to think twice about doing it today with all the financial woes facing newspapers. *Soulful* and *Black Voices Quarterly (BVQ)* were discontinued in 2004 when Tribune sold Black Voices to America Online. A year later, Time Inc. discontinued the insertion of *Sports Illustrated on Campus* in 150 campus newspapers from 2003 to 2005.⁷² It also ceased publication of *Life* as a 13 million supplement in 103 newspapers.⁷³

In June 2008 *RiseUp* made its debut as a multicultural supplement intended to bridge racial and ethnic divides, but it folded two months later and filed for bankruptcy. "The print version of *RiseUp* magazine has suffered the same challenges as much of the newspaper industry," said Janice Ellis, co-founder and executive editor of *RiseUp* in a June 2009 e-mailed statement to *FOLIO: The Magazine for Magazine Management*.⁷⁴

While Ellis, president and CEO of the Ellis Management Marketing Group (EMMG), blames shrinking advertising revenue and the overall downturn in the newspaper industry, another factor could be that the magazine grew too big too quickly. EMMG launched *RiseUp* with 4 million copies, and Ellis told *Folio*: that she wanted to increase distribution to 8 million in the fall. "By the first quarter 2009, circulation could be as high as 12 million," she added. "Our goal is to spread this important conversation as broadly as we can."⁷⁵

By general market standards, goals of 4 million, 8 million, or even 12 million are well within reach. *Life* died at 13 million, while *USA Weekend* and *Parade* had circulations of 23 million⁷⁶ and 33 million respectively in mid-2009. Unlike *RiseUp*, other magazines targeted to multicultural audiences took a more conservative approach. To control its growth and costs, *BET Weekend* launched at 800,000 and hit 1.3 million in three years, declining many requests from newspapers that wanted to carry it. Similarly, *HealthQuest* started its newspaper distribution at 500,000 copies, as did *African Americans on Wheels*. Together, *Tuesday* and *Tuesday at Home* never exceeded 5 million.

In March 2009 *The Kansas City Star*, which had an agreement to print and distribute *RiseUp*, sued EMMG for 2.2 million dollars for unpaid bills, interest, and legal fees. The Los

Angeles Newspaper Group sought \$93,306.⁷⁷

Some of the keys to success for targeted magazine supplements are the same for any startup—a sound business plan for a good idea with proven demand and/or need, a solid financial base, and an experienced team. Gone are the days of trying to operate a startup from advertising paycheck to paycheck. Johnson was able to launch his business with a \$500 loan against his mother's new furniture. Payton used \$10,000 in savings to start *African Americans on Wheels* with 500,000 copies in 1995 and convinced some clients to prepay their ads.

Of the magazine supplements profiled from the second half of the 20th century, *African Americans on Wheels* is the only one still standing. What contributed to Payton's success? As a former automotive columnist and newspaper editor, Payton noticed a void in coverage and sought to fill it. He was the first to obtain an ABC audit for a newspaper-distributed black magazine. He started one of the first websites in his category. He diversified and expanded his business to Asian and Latino consumers, as well as women. Payton also forged strong relationships with movers and shakers throughout the automotive industry; expanded his digital, marketing and research offerings; developed an array of partnerships; tapped into the lucrative auto shows; and began delving into other industries, such as travel and energy conservation.

It's often said that when America catches a cold, black America develops pneumonia. The slump in advertising illustrates this for some black consumer magazines, with supplements likely being the stepchildren receiving less attention. Total measured advertising expenditures on U.S. consumer magazines overall fell 14.3 percent for the first six months of 2009, compared with the same period in 2008, according to TNS Media Intelligence. The Publishers Information Bureau, which looks at "rate-card reported advertising revenue," had a higher loss of 21.2 percent for the period with the same decrease for Sunday magazines. While PIB figures fell below the national average for *Black Enterprise* and *Essence*, they were 31.8 percent for *Ebony*, 39.3 percent for *Jet*, and 39.8 percent for *Vibe*, which folded in mid-2009 but was quickly acquired by the owners of *Uptown* magazine. By fall of 2009, Johnson Publishing was reportedly looking for partners or buyers for *Ebony* and *Jet*.

Black magazines didn't reap the benefits of the dot.com boom of the last century, but they didn't fall as hard when the boom when bust. However, the auto industry slump is wreaking havoc since automotive is the No. 1 category for black media across the board. PIB reports that auto ads are down 43.3 percent. Still, that's 774.8 million dollars in magazine spending for just the first half of 2009, compared with 139.4 million dollars for an entire year for all African-American targeted media, including network and syndicated television programming, cable television, national magazines, and radio spots, according to Nielson Monitor-Plus.

Going forward, the challenge in the new century is to develop a viable multi-platform strategy with digital delivery at the core, said Byron Lewis, founder of the UniWorld Group and former *Tuesday* executive. This is what Payton is doing, and that

appears to be the formula of success for all types of media in this era of convergence.

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- ⁴⁹ Pride and Wilson, *A History of the Black Press*, 13.
- ⁵⁰ Johnson, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, 179.
- ⁵¹ *BET Weekend* Media Kit for 1998.
- ⁵² Wolseley, *The Black Press*, 76.
- ⁵³ Johnson and Prijatel, *The Magazine From Cover to Cover*, 3, 7, 45.
- ⁵⁴ Brownlee, "Magazines Win Black Readers," B1.
- ⁵⁵ Childs, "Sun Adds Black Magazine," 43.
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- ⁶⁰ "BET Weekend to Newsstands," 25.
- ⁶¹ "BET Weekend Debuts on Newsstands," 17.
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