

**The
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**Pan Africanist Press:
Proudly Celebrating 400 Issues of Pambazuka News
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The following words were highlighted on the front page of the first African American owned and operated newspaper in the United States - [Freedom's Journal](#) in 1827.

"We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us."

The founders of *Freedom's Journal*, Samuel Cornish and John B. Russwurm, published 52 issues of *Freedom's Journal* that were distributed in more than 11 states.

One of the most distinguished writers for *Freedom's Journal* was David Walker, a leading spokesperson for resistance and abolition, who in 1829 penned [David Walker's Appeal](#).

More than a statement of rights, or a historical survey of the African American experience, *David Walker's Appeal* was a mobilizing tool for the growing early 19th century militant resistance of the African American community. The appeal so frightened the slave holding establishment that a bounty was placed on the life of David Walker. *David Walker's Appeal* was not the first salvo in the African American struggle for human rights but one of the most forthright. By the end of the Civil War in 1865 there would be more than 40 African American owned and operated newspapers in the United States.

[Pambazuka](#) follows the same tradition as *Freedom's Journal*. Taken from the Kiswahili words meaning "the dawn" *Pambazuka* is a tool for liberation and information. In the same way that *Freedom's Journal* signaled the rise of militant black nationalism in the 19th century so, too, does *Pambazuka* provide a voice for a growing Pan African

community. In the same way that the [Chicago Defender](#) and the [Negro World](#) signaled a voice of resistance so does *Pambazuka* echo an organized and visionary African global community. Much like the words and spirit of [Muhammad Speaks](#) and the [Black Panther Newspaper](#), *Pambazuka* is a philosophy, a vision ,and a movement.

The timing of the press is crucial in providing a platform for movements of social change and activism. When *Freedom's Journal* was launched in the early 19th century it was able to catalyze the movements for Black Nationalism and the development of separate independent African American institutions. When the *Chicago Defender* began publishing in 1905 it spoke to a movement of African Americans migrating from the southern states to the urban cities of the North. The *Defender* became the most influential African American newspaper in the United States before World War I and could count amongst its outstanding writers and editors both Langston Hughes and the esteemed Poet Laureate Gwendolyn Brooks. Joel Augustus Rogers (J.A. Rogers) as a correspondent for the *Pittsburgh Courier* , covered the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935-36 providing a perspective that was not adequately presented in the main stream press. Rogers was also the author of [From Superman to Man](#) (1917), [World's Great Men of Color, 2 volumes](#), and several other essential writings.

Pambazuka News was officially launched at the end of 2001. As we go to press *Pambazuka* has more than 15,000 subscribers and more than 500,000 readers. The list of writers is more than 1000 and includes an eclectic blend of academics, activists, journalists, civil society representatives, policy makers, and community people from around the world. *Pambazuka's* news coverage is not limited to Africa but seeks to cover the broader global community with an emphasis on Africa and the African Diaspora. FAHAMU: Networks for Social Justice, the publisher of *Pambazuka News*, plays a larger activist role in providing courses on new technology, organizational management skills and assistance with campaign building. With the addition of podcasts and blog links , *Pambazuka* is a treasure trove for information and activism.

Marcus Garvey's *Negro World* was produced in New York beginning in 1918 and had a worldwide distribution of several hundred thousand up until its' end in the early 1930s. While primarily intended as the voice of the Universal Negro Improvement Association the "Negro World" reported on individual branches of the UNIA, UNIA enterprises, and the politics of African people at home and abroad. Much like *Pambazuka*, the *Negro World* reached the United States, the Caribbean, Central America , Europe, and Africa. At one point the *Negro World* was published in Spanish and French and included some of the most prominent African American writers and thinkers of the 20th century; Hubert Harrison, Arthur Schomburg (founder of the Schomburg Library) and writer Zora Neale Hurston. The *Negro World* newspaper was a "launching pad" for the Harlem Renaissance and the spirit of resistance that followed black migration North and the lessons learned from World War I.

The African/African American press has served as a steady influence in providing information that could be used to build movements of social and political change. The work of Edward Wilmot Blyden (*Liberian Herald*), and Duse Mohammed Ali (*African Times and Orient Review*) were forerunners to the contributions of Namdi Azikwe, the first President of Nigeria and the founder of the *West African Pilot*. On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, a militant activist press fueled the movement of Civil Rights and laid the basis for a Pan African consciousness.

[ed note: please [let us know](#) if you find websites with archives for any of the publications mentioned that don't have links.]

The People's Translation Service from Oakland, California published the bi-monthly [Newsfront International](#). *Washington Notes on Africa* was instrumental in the building of the movement against apartheid in southern Africa. *Southern African* provided a regular detailed focus on all things southern Africa. Our communities could count on *Africa Report*, *African News*, *Black News*, *Facts and Reports*, *Africa Now*, *Multinational Monitor*, *Jeune Africa*, *Africa*, *West Africa*, *SECHABA*, *Black News*, *The African World*, *African Concord*, *New Africa*, *South*, *Africa Asia*, *AIM*, *California Newsreel*, and many others to provide supply information that could be used for mobilization. Sometimes the publications were weeklies and at times there were occasionals but always providing much needed information that was not easily accessible.

The founding of *Muhammad Speaks* in 1961 represented the growth of the Nation of Islam in the United States. Previously the words and the messages of the Nation of Islam had appeared in the Pittsburgh Courier and other press outlets. Reaching a circulation of more than 500,000 *Muhammad Speaks* included news and updates on African affairs. *The Black Panther*, first called the *Black Panther Black Community News Service* began in 1971. *The Black Panther* newspaper was both a national and international journal that provided information on the global struggles of African peoples. Similar to *Pambazuka* in form, the *Black Panther* newspaper presented culture, local news, international news, and a new vision about African peoples globally and nationally. One of the most essential and timely sections of the *Black Panther* newspaper was its coverage of international affairs. For the price of twenty five cents the reader could follow Amilcar Cabral, Samora Machel, Cuba, Vietnam., Mozambique, the Congo, South Africa, East Timor, Ethiopia, Brazil, Zimbabwe, and Namibia.

The many issues facing the global African community today demand our collective attention and action. AFRICOM must be opposed in all shapes and formats. There must be a total cancellation of the odious debt that has been imposed on African peoples. The voices of women must be respected and their exploitation in all forms must be ended. We need to re-strengthen our global links by forging new alliances of information and exchange between African peoples in the Americas, the United States, and in Africa. There is a need to build on the legacy of *Freedom's Journal* and ensure that our we can plead our own causes through our own media. We must develop a movement and a consciousness to free long-held political prisoners in the United States - they have suffered too long for standing up for their people's freedom. Our organizations must be stronger, more accountable, more committed to human rights, and more adept at using new technologies for change. We must talk to each other and learn to reflect that being African is a history of pride and struggle that can sustain our communities. Our art and our culture must be tools for social and political change. We have much work to do.

Our task as subscribers and readers of *Pambazuka* is to ensure the future of *Pambazuka* and its umbrella FAHAMU. Many of the newspapers and journals that led the charge of media for our movements of human rights and social justice were not able to sustain the finances and the labor needed in order to continue to provide information and analysis.

Our collective celebration of this 400th issue is tempered with the reality of the tasks ahead and the need to respect the legacy of an activist media that laid the foundation for *Pambazuka*.

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