



Connecting with Black Media: Guidance for Public Relations Professionals

Throughout history, Black media has played a pivotal role in society. As noted by the [Black Media Initiative](#), Black media advocates for justice and encourages the Black community to vote and enact change. Black media covers news related to Africa and other countries of the African diaspora more than mainstream media. Through the news covered and words used, Black media focuses on the humanity of people who are often dehumanized by society and powerfully weaves together topics from the past and present.

Together with Black PR Wire, we held a candid discussion with media experts on [the state of Black media today](#) and how media outlets and public relations professionals can better connect as the news industry continues to change.

Learn how our panel answered the following questions:

- [What is the distinction between Black media and Black-owned media?](#)
- [What is the best way to build authentic relationships with Black media?](#)
- [What are some common misperceptions about Black media?](#)
- [Is social media important for Black media and audiences?](#)
- [How will Black media evolve moving forward?](#)



Bernadette Morris

Black PR Wire,
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Dr. Frances Draper

AFRO-American Newspapers



Rahman Johnson

Edward Waters University,
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Craig Newmark Graduate
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Traci Cloyd, Moderator

South Florida PBS

What is the distinction between Black media and Black-owned media?

Cheryl Thompson-Morton explained that generally speaking, Black media refers to outlets that target Black audiences. In comparison, Black-owned media “is not just about targeting communities, it’s about who owns the outlet and who benefits from resources being generated,” said Thompson-Morton.

Supporting Black-owned media outlets paves the way for diverse voices to be heard and, according to research by Nielsen, “[long-term spend commitments can transform business for diverse owners](#). Investment can directly support local communities and bring authentic brand partnerships to their audiences.”



Black-owned television stations reach as much as 41% of all adults in markets where they are present, and Black-owned radio has a reach among Black listeners that’s six times higher than their total market reach during key weekday drive times.

Source: [Minority-Owned Media Gets a Boost with Nielsen’s New Study](#), Forbes

Overall, the “amount of Black people owning media outlets is abysmal,” said Thompson-Morton. “Black ownership matters.” [Nielsen](#) research shows “the need for trusted voices to herald the issues, trends, and triumphs of Black Americans remains clear” and “Black audiences are driving demand for content where their identity is represented ... and Black-owned media plays an important part in providing representative content to the diverse Black community.”

To amplify Black-owned media and promote collaboration between outlets, the [Black Media Initiative](#) launched an [interactive map](#) and a [directory](#) of hundreds of outlets across the United States.

Supporting and promoting Black-owned media outlets will generate additional benefits and resources so they can continue to grow and provide for their communities.





What is the best way to build authentic relationships with Black media?

When it comes to building authentic connections with Black media and Black-owned media outlets, being yourself and being true are key. "Authenticity is important ... Authenticity means being exactly who you are—say what you mean, mean what you say," said Rahman Johnson.

Reaching out to Black media year-round—not just when looking for coverage—helps build connections. Asking questions, doing research, listening, and understanding biases are all important tips for authentically building meaningful relationships.

"Journalists think of editors that they've built authentic relationships with first over other connections—so it's important to build these types of relationships," said Johnson.

It also doesn't hurt to revisit the basics. When reaching out to media:

- Don't distribute news to a mass list of reporters and journalists
- Know what the reporter covers and their audience
- Make sure each reporter and media outlet name is correct



24%

of journalists immediately reject pitches if they aren't personalized

When it comes to pitches, these tips will help catch the eye of reporters and make it easier for them to tell your story:

- Take time to craft your pitch; be detailed and concise
- Connect the dots from your content to the reporter's audience
- Include a link to your news release that contains data and downloadable multimedia
- Don't forget your contact information



88%

of journalists prefer pitches that are 300 words

Here are tactical tips to keep in mind during your media pitching process:

- Email reporters, don't message them through social channels
- The day you send your pitch isn't vital, but some journalists prefer to be pitched on a Monday
- Many journalists prefer to receive pitches before noon
- Never use Google Translate to localize news release content



92%

of journalists prefer to be pitched via 1:1 email

Source: [Takeaways from the State of Journalism 2023](#), Muck Rack

[Muck Rack](#) found that 76% of journalists are more likely to cover a story if offered an exclusive. Pertaining to Black-owned media, consider this approach from Dr. Frances Draper: “When you have a story that’s really of importance to our community, how about getting it to us first? We’ll embargo it until when you say to release it ... We shouldn’t be the ones picking it up from mainstream media, mainstream media should be picking it up from us.”

Lastly, don’t forget to add multimedia. Almost every media outlet today requires it before publishing a story. Keep these pointers in mind when adding multimedia to your news:



Skip marketing images and use visuals that show the impact of your news.



B-roll allows video editors to shape their own story.



Video should not feature stock footage or include overlay text.

Bernadette Morris reminds us that visuals are an “opportunity to connect.” As you pitch a story, include visuals that “reflect an image of a person that looks like the audience you’re reaching out to.”

“At the end of the day, media is just that—media,” Johnson explained. “As an anchor reporter, I wasn’t a Black anchor reporter. My Blackness informs what I do, but at the end of the day, I’m just a journalist, and I want every bit of information that allows me to tell an intelligent, competent story.”



What are some common misperceptions about Black media?

When looking to connect with Black media and Black-owned media, understanding common misperceptions will help grow the relationship between media and organizations, as well as between media outlets and communities.

Black media and Black-owned media only report on stories related to racism.

- ➔ Morris explained that while racism is a key component of stories that are shared by Black media, and the way it is shared is massively important, it is not the only topic that the Black community focuses on. Relevant interests to Black audiences include health, education, welfare, sports, and more. "Everything that relates to us as people ... we report on that and share that information very passionately and creatively so that it reaches our audiences."

Black media and Black-owned media will only cover a story if advertising is also purchased.

- ➔ While being a business means finding opportunities for media buys, Morris stated that if the story is of value to the readers, it's going to be shared regardless of ad purchases. Covering news that is important and informative to audiences comes first. But there are often opportunities for media and organizations to partner and support each other—and sometimes that includes advertising.

Black media and Black-owned media are behind the times and not online.

- ➔ According to [Pew Research Center](#), 53% of Americans prefer getting news via digital devices, 7% prefer radio, and 5% prefer print media. Half of Americans at least sometimes get news from social media and about 23% from podcasts. People seek out news across a variety of platforms and Black media have these covered. Morris shared that newspapers are often distributed in neighborhoods that reflect the audiences that want them, but the option to subscribe and deliver elsewhere is available. Referring to the [directory compiled by the Black Media Initiative](#), several Black-owned media outlets have podcast, radio, or TV offerings, and nearly all have an online presence.

In their report, [Why Black Media Matters Now](#), the Black Media Initiative found that **Black media publishes as high as six times more coverage than mainstream media on issues of importance to Black communities**, including racism, health disparities, and voting access.

- ➔ Black media covers health issues of importance to Black communities (including maternal health, hypertension, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, and sickle cell disease) at higher levels than mainstream media.
- ➔ Black media connects news events across subjects to cover wider issues of injustice, including threats to voting access, disparities in medical care, and policing and mass incarceration.
- ➔ Black media provides historical context to present-day challenges.

Is social media important for Black media and audiences?

To understand the role of social media when it comes to connecting Black media and audiences, Johnson explained that there is a difference between “broadcast” and “communications.” Broadcasting is typically one-way—a message is shared by one party and received by another. “We’re in an age of true communications,” said Johnson, with back-and-forth conversations taking place between media and audience.

Social media is a tool that facilitates instantaneous conversation and connects organizations and consumers. Johnson shared that social media “makes us more effective communicators” and helps reporters understand what audiences want.

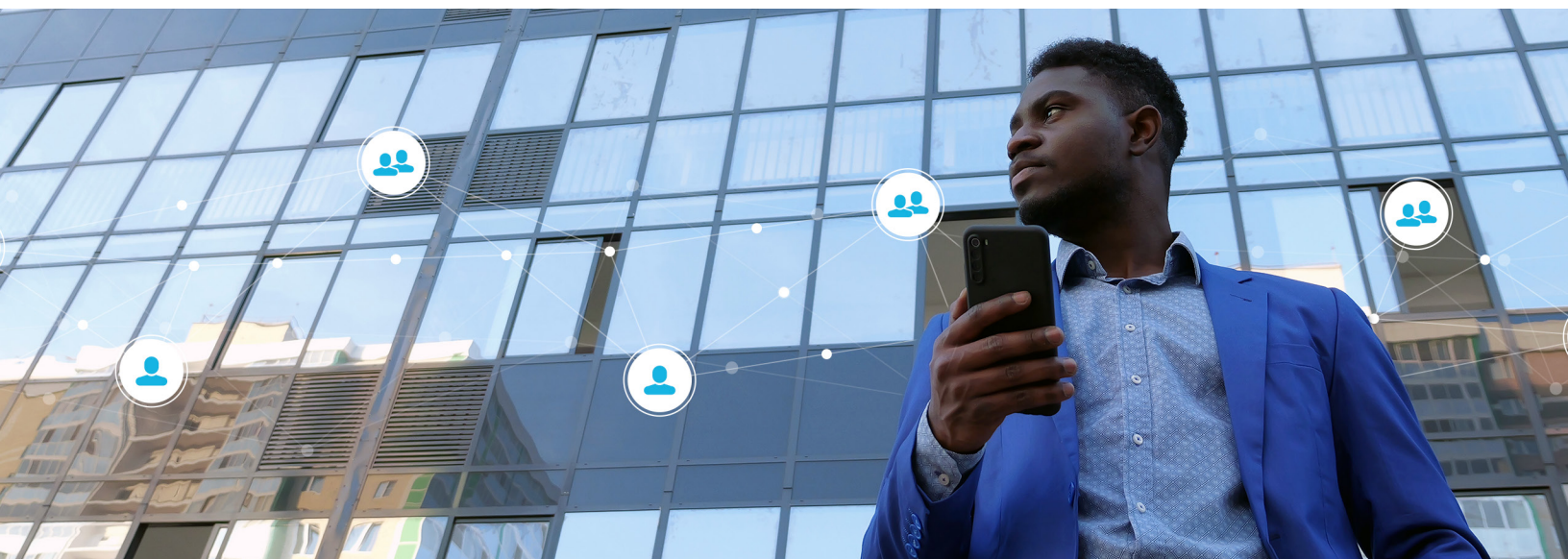


The top five social media platforms utilized by Black people based on average daily time in minutes are TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

Source: [Social Media Continue to be Important Political Outlets for Black Americans](#), Pew Research Center

Additionally, social media plays an important role in encouraging collective action. [Pew Research Center](#) shared that Black social media users find social sites important for getting involved with issues they care about or for finding like-minded people. [Black Twitter](#), a virtual public community that provides a counter-narrative to the mainstream coverage of Black people, has especially offered support and increased visibility for issues that matter to the Black community.

For Johnson—and several users—Black Twitter is a place to take a break and laugh. “As people who have endured a great deal of hurt in many ways, sometimes we have to laugh to keep from crying in situations that we’ve been put in.”





How will Black media evolve moving forward?

Like the rest of the media industry, trends, tools, and technology will continue to change as time goes on. Black media, Black-owned media, and news consumers should continue to connect and learn from one another. Increased partnerships between media outlets and increased collaboration between media and audiences will benefit the news industry and communities.

Several on our panel encouraged connecting with Black media year-round. While there are times of the year like Black History Month or Juneteenth, specific observances commemorating Black communities, Black media reports news all year. Connecting with Black media and reaching Black audiences should be engrained "into all your content versus specific times of year," said Johnson.

Dr. Draper wrapped up our discussion with a few points on the resiliency of Black media and Black communities. "Legacy Black press has been through several major events ... they're used to pivoting. They're resilient in a way that other media have not had to be." From the civil rights movement to COVID-19, Black media and Black-owned media have found ways to move forward and will continue to do so.

About Business Wire

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