



The State of Black Media in 2022:

An Overview for Public
Relations Professionals

In 2022, Black media outlets are more prevalent, more active, and more followed than ever before. [Publishing up to six times more](#) frequently on topics directly impacting the Black community, these publications often break news days or even weeks before mainstream counterparts. With high reach, high visibility, and high engagement, building relationships with Black media and their audiences should be at the top of communications plans around the globe.

Business Wire and [Black PR Wire](#) brought together three experts to discuss the state of Black media and the role it plays both within the news ecosystem and the communities they serve. Moderated by [Bernadette Morris](#), founder, owner, and CEO of Sonshine Communications and Black PR Wire, Business Wire's media partner, our panel featured:



[Bernadette Morris](#)

Founder, Owner, CEO
Sonshine
Communications,
Black PR Wire



[Cheryl Thompson-Morton](#)

Black Media Initiative Director
Center for Community Media,
City University of New York



[Dexter Bridgeman](#)

CEO, Founder
M.I.A. Media Group LLC



[Chloe Jones](#)

Executive Producer
Black News Channel

From how news is covered to how that news powers mainstream media, this panel provided deep insights into the role of Black media in today's news ecosystem.

- ➡ Why is Black media so important?
- ➡ How has Black media publishing and news consumption changed in the last five years?
- ➡ How has COVID-19 changed media, particularly for Black publishers and consumers?
- ➡ What is Black media's influence on mainstream media?
- ➡ How do communicators build relationships with Black media?

Why is Black media so important?

While Black press is not new, the prevalence of Black media is emerging and critical. Black press has played a unique role in American society and journalism [for nearly 200 years](#). With the launch of *Freedom's Journal*, the first newspaper produced by Black Americans, a community faced with limited rights and means of communication began to more broadly share their views on social, political, and economic issues. The intention – “We wish to plead our own cause.” – was countercultural at its inception, largely because this called for a recognition of Black humanity.

As Chloe Jones noted, “Black and Brown communities have been largely underserved for a long time.” Today’s Black media outlets are looking to fill this void by producing high quality coverage on mainstream topics as well as those of interest to their specific audiences. Written by Black journalists, these publishers understand their readers’ needs, fears, and interests. Publishing more frequently than their mainstream counterparts, these publications have secured their hold as primary resources for audiences for representative information.



Black Media has reach: Black media outlets are partnering with mainstream media to provide authentic content for Black readers. This satisfies the need on both ends to deliver this highly sought-after news to wider audiences.



Black media is powerful. In 2021, The Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at the City University of New York issued a report, [Why Black Media Matters Now](#). This report noted several key facts:

- ➔ Black media publishes up to 6x more coverage than mainstream media on issues related to racism, health disparities, and voting access.
- ➔ During COVID-19, Black media wrote 2x more articles than mainstream media related to frontline and essential workers.
- ➔ Black media covers a variety of health news at higher levels than mainstream media, including health, hypertension, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, and sickle cell disease.
- ➔ Black media centers the humanity of people in their coverage in a way that is distinct from mainstream media.

Just as Black press was important at its beginning in 1827, it remains vital today.



Black Media is diverse: It is important to reiterate that Black media does not write only about Black news stories. These outlets cover the same news features as their mainstream counterparts.

How has Black media publishing and news consumption changed in the last five years?

The biggest shifts in Black media over the last five years include the decline of print media and the impact of social media in the news and information space.

Our experts noted that while print remains important, the decline of print media across the industry hollowed out Black media outlets' advertising models, leading publishers to rethink how they were going to diversify to remain relevant, sustainable, and profitable when competing against Google or Facebook for attention and views.

In that same period, viewers stopped waiting for news to be delivered and turned to social and search channels to find breaking news on demand. This led Black media publishers to seek out [cross-publication partnerships](#) designed to increase the reach of their content.

“Black media must embrace change by adding social media, digital media, and technology to their platforms...We have to remain relevant.”

- Dexter Bridgeman



While publishers like [M.I.A Media Group](#) looked for new ways to increase reach and revenues via targeted partnerships, they also leveraged social media in two ways:

- ➔ **Identifying emerging trends with social:** Today news broadcasters across all genres are watching social media to identify emerging buzz with hopes of being one of the first to break a story. With viewer attention at an all-time premium, news is moving faster than ever.
- ➔ **Using social for reach:** With a multitude of tools available today to share stories – Facebook Live, Instagram Live, TikTok – a formal broadcast studio is no longer essential.

How has COVID-19 changed media, particularly for Black publishers and consumers?

COVID-19 sped up the evolution of media. While the [pandemic](#) closed many mainstream and targeted publications, publishers who tapped into emergency funding or changed advertising models were able to transform their businesses and stay open. For these outlets, continuing to publish with fewer staffers was and continues to be a challenge.

There is more news to share now, and faster than ever before. COVID-19 and social unrest created a 24/7 news cycle that required fact-checking to ensure timely and accurate delivery of key information to readers and customers. An important fundamental element of Black media is its emphasis on local news. Their readership look to them for highly specific and local guidance, and to provide a high value service to the communities they serve.



What is Black media's influence on mainstream media?

Black publications cover the same stories as mainstream media but add a focus that mainstream media often overlook. When it comes to a wide range of topics – from racial disparities to the health of frontline workers to Black athletes at the Olympics – many of today's mainstream media news stories are breaking first within the Black media market. The interest and conversations driven by these initial pieces subsequently draws mainstream media attention and results in broader coverage.



“Black media covers stories that we otherwise would not hear about and know about.”

- Cheryl Thompson-Morton

Examples of this include the tragedies of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor. NBC is often cited as breaking the story of Taylor's family filing a lawsuit against the Louisville Metro Police Department, but [coverage levels](#) on this topic in mainstream media (<0.5%) compared to Black media (>4%) proves otherwise.

Additionally, Black publications covering the Olympics, for example, took extra time to tell the story of Black athletes, their records, and achievements.

In the [Why Black Media Matters Now](#) report, Cheryl Thompson-Morton notes that Black media uniquely centers and humanizes the communities covered compared to mainstream media.

- ➔ Black media explicitly uses the word “Black” in coverage. “Black” was consistently in the most frequently used 100 words across various topics, and in many cases was uniquely prevalent when compared with mainstream media coverage.
- ➔ Black media consistently emphasized certain social identities including community, family, women, and children. Mainstream media did not use these words with similar frequency.

Building relationships with Black media starts with information alignment.

Research is key in finding the right audience for the news you want to share.

Black media is highly focused on authentic communications. Keep your goals in mind but take time to understand your story's relevance for this audience. This will not only help with identifying which media to work with, but also with building ongoing relationships.

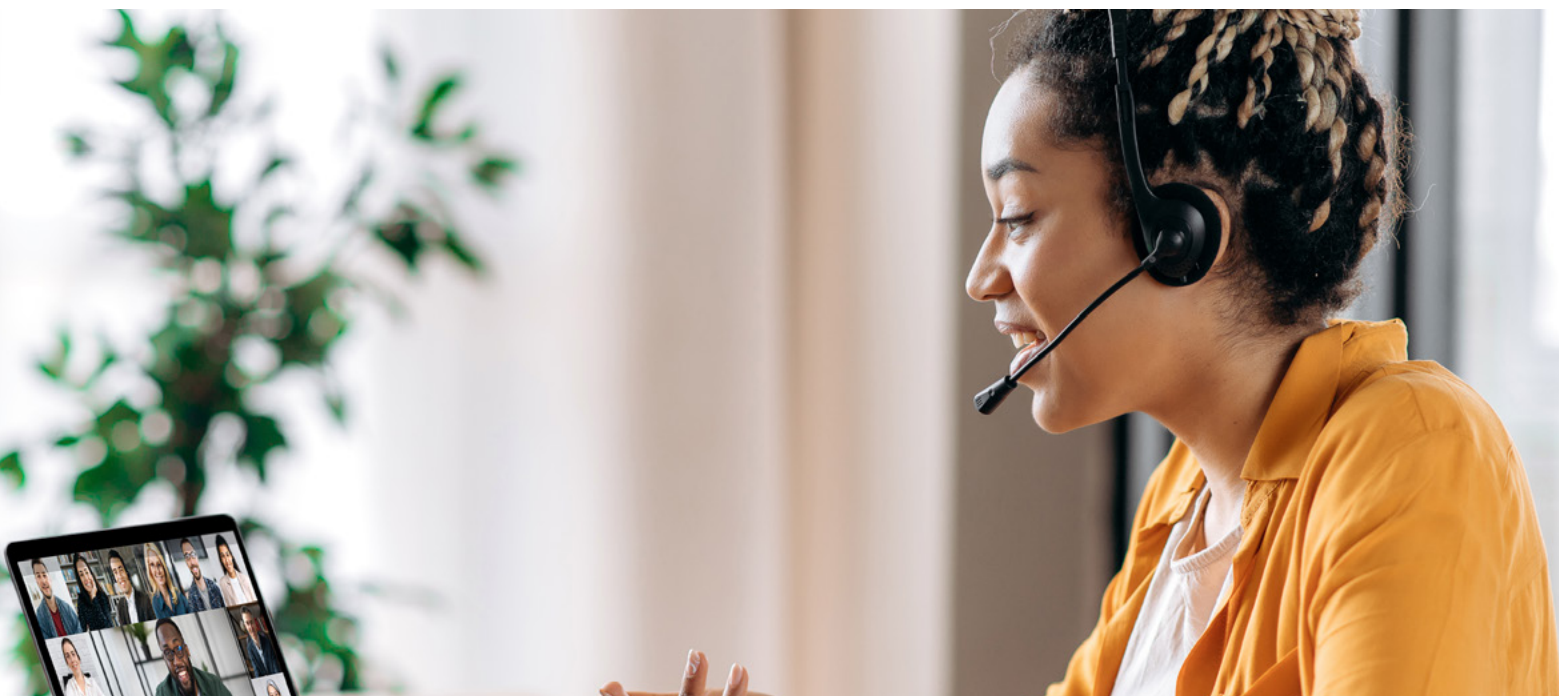
Developing open communication with Black media reporters means developing content that embraces this audience's preferences. Pay attention to cultural norms, language styles, and your own personal bias and how that may affect your work.

Additionally, we recommend these best practices:

- ➔ Build a plan, not a pitch, to demonstrate your ongoing commitment.
- ➔ Keep the lines of communication open. Be available to answer questions.
- ➔ Black media outlets understand the power of multimedia and the ability to re-purpose it across channels to increase readership. Supply your own authentic imagery — skip the marketing content. Create images that tell stories, not sell products.

“Black media has always been a consistent and a crucial part of the news landscape.”

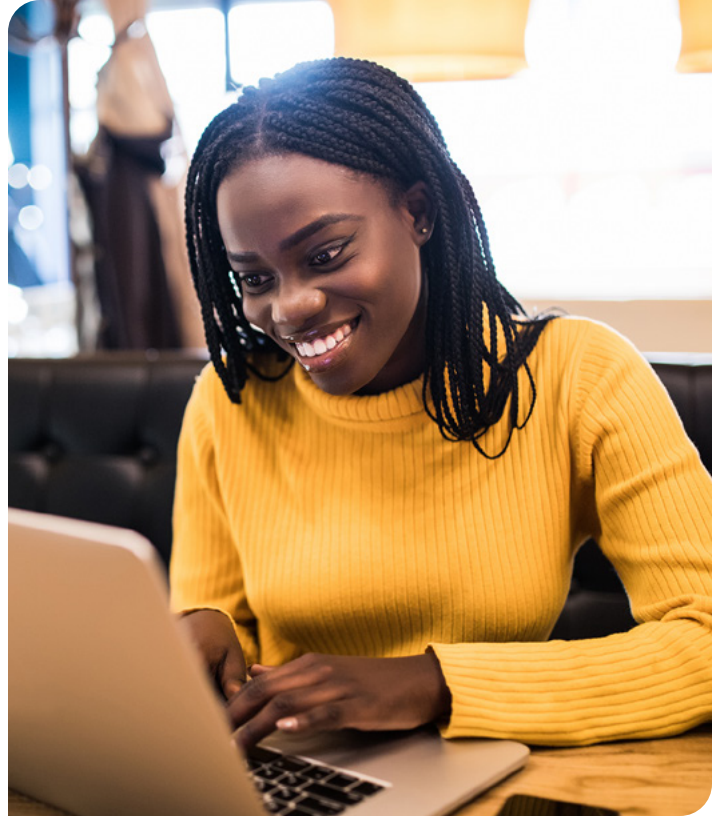
- Chloe Jones



Learn more about Black media

Black media has a deep history and continues to evolve today, while holding the *Freedom Journal's* sentiment, "We wish to plead our own cause," front and center. Black media has high reach, visibility, and engagement, is a key source of news, especially in Black communities, and is a key player in today's news ecosystem.

- ➔ Watch our on-demand webinar, [The State of Black Media 2022](#)
- ➔ Learn tips for [building campaigns that honor Black communities](#)



About Business Wire

[Business Wire](#), a Berkshire Hathaway company, is the global leader in [news release distribution](#) and [regulatory disclosure](#). Public relations, investor relations, public policy, and marketing professionals rely on Business Wire for secure and accurate distribution of market-moving news and multimedia.

Founded in 1961, Business Wire is a trusted source for news organizations, journalists, investment professionals, and regulatory authorities, delivering news directly into editorial systems and leading online news sources via its multi-patented NX Network. Business Wire's global newsrooms are available to meet the needs of communications professionals and news media worldwide.

Ensure your story gets heard. If you would like more information on how Business Wire can help your business, please contact us today.

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