

Understanding John H. Johnson and Ebony Magazine Financial Responsiveness to Rise of Black Power in the U.S, 1966

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Abstract : This paper argues for Johnson's financial responsiveness to the rise of Black Power and its advocate, 'Stokely Carmichael' in 1966. John H. Johnson was a Black businessman and the owner of Ebony magazine, one of the widely read Black magazines in the U.S. His magazine, however, was designed only to promoting Black fashion, aesthetic, marketing, and consumerism. In mid-1966, the mainstream of the Civil Rights movement was heading into two distinct camps when some of its advocates, led by Stokely Carmichael, began to question the slow pace of the Civil Rights and sought to pursue a more radical approach to bring about upheaval to the Black community. Their new approach, however, propelled the national media into paying close attention to their activities, their new methods, and their radical orientations. In fact, the major White-oriented media discredited Carmichael and distorted his public image via sensational stories and race-mongering reports. However, the Black owned outlets such as The Liberator advocated his agendas, whereas other magazines such as The Crisis rejected them. Based on such oral sources and Ebony's online issues, this paper adds and argues that Johnson had also responded to the rise of Black Power and Carmichael. This reaction had, in fact, aimed at scooping and selling Carmichael and his new orientation as well as advertising him in his magazine to attract the readers who showed a strong tendency to hear and read about the heyday and even the ferment of Black Power. This paper is part of an ongoing project which aims at framing our understanding of how the Black print media and the modern Black liberation struggle were correlated and could shape each other by appraising their agendas, milestones, and their pivotal figures.

Keywords : Black power, Ebony magazine, John Johnson, Stokely Carmichael

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