

# ProQuest Historical Newspapers™ — Black Newspapers

## in Starting Lineup as Professor Tackles Sports History Research

**For historian Derrick White, ProQuest Historical Newspapers—Black Newspapers solves the biggest research challenge he faces: access to hard-to-find information.**

As assistant professor of history at Florida Atlantic University (FAU), a fast-growing university based in Boca Raton, Florida, White doesn't have access to extensive on-site research resources. "Because FAU only began offering degrees in the mid-1960s, there aren't rooms and rooms of microfilm on campus that I can use in my research," says White, whose specialty is 20th-century American history. "As a result, the biggest obstacle in my research is access."

Founded in 1964, FAU was the first university in the country to offer only upper-division and graduate-level work. FAU, which began offering freshman and sophomore courses in the mid-1980s, has grown rapidly over the past 40 years. Today, it has several nationally recognized research centers, and its seven partner campuses serve 26,000 students through more than 170 degree programs.

In keeping with its emergence as a major university, FAU was the first institution to purchase ProQuest Historical Newspapers—Black Newspapers. According to White, the collection has transformed how he conducts research and how he teaches. White teaches five courses in African-American and U.S. history.

### **Accessing primary sources makes the difference in research.**

To illustrate how ProQuest has transformed his research, White cites his next major research project, a history of football programs at black colleges. "No one has written a historical monograph on black college football programs, and I don't believe it would be possible to do a comprehensive, insightful analysis of the subject without ProQuest Historical Newspapers—Black Newspapers," White says. "Before the 1970s, black newspapers were the only newspapers that covered black college football. You could say black college athletics was off the grid because major newspapers didn't do the systematic analysis of black college football like they did for the nationally recognized programs."

As a topic of historical research, black college football might have stayed "off the grid" without ProQuest Historical Newspapers—Black Newspapers. With no access to existing scholarship on black college football and no historical coverage in other newspapers, White's first task was to understand the general narrative of the topic. "I spent a few weeks just searching coaches and games," he says. "ProQuest Historical Newspapers—Black Newspapers turned up lots of hits that could be researched more deeply to establish the broad outlines of the story."



**Because you can do things with ProQuest Historical Newspapers—Black Newspapers that weren't possible before, I'm convinced that the collection will spur additional research and scholarship.**

— Derrick White, Assistant Professor,  
Department of History,  
Florida Atlantic University

**ProQuest®**  
Start here.

## Uncovering amazing new historical facts.

In addition to understanding the general narrative of black college football, White says he was able to make some important discoveries during this preliminary research phase. "I found some amazing stories that I wouldn't have found without ProQuest," he says. "For example, I found a series of stories about Ralph Oves, the first white player in a black football college program. I just stumbled onto the reference. Then, after more focused research using the ProQuest collection, I uncovered more details about his football career in the 1940s at Lincoln University, and how the University and public reacted. It was an important discovery because it shows that integration was, and is, a two-way street."

White also credits ProQuest with making his day-to-day online research more efficient and productive. "ProQuest has one of the best search engines I have ever used," he says, "If you can use Google and Yahoo!, then you can use ProQuest Historical Newspapers—Black Newspapers. It returns results that are easy to understand and makes it very easy to move from the search results to the content."

The ability to search on all article types, including photographs, letters to the editor, and editorials, enables scholars to get a fuller sense of the topic, White says, noting that having the entire newspaper page displayed makes it possible for the researcher to see how newspapers treated the story. "With many databases you would get the article, but you might completely miss the accompanying photograph and how it was positioned on the page," he explains.

For White, the scope of the collection also sets it apart. "In addition to top black newspapers like the *Chicago Defender* and *Pittsburgh Courier*, the collection includes the *Atlanta Daily World*, which proved to be indispensable in a project I'm completing on the Institute of the Black World, an Atlanta-based black think tank."

## Enriching the learning process.

White also relies on ProQuest Historical Newspapers—Black Newspapers to teach students the value of using primary sources in their research. "Because everything in history research today is database driven, I require students to use ProQuest Historical Newspapers so they can get the stories themselves from an authoritative primary source," he says. "Students have access to hard copy documents and other databases, but these sources are limited and don't allow students to track a topic daily or weekly like the ProQuest collection does."

According to White, the use of ProQuest Historical Newspapers—Black Newspapers enhances the learning process. "For example, in my sports history class, students who were responsible for presenting a brief history of athletics at Florida A&M and Bethune Cookman College used the ProQuest collection to find detailed information for their report," he explains. "Students noted that it was interesting that there was little coverage of black athletics in national newspapers like *The New York Times* or even in local papers like *The Miami Herald*. I believe it gave students a sense of the nature of segregation in America, that even news was segregated."

As for the future, White believes that ProQuest will play an increasingly important role in historical scholarship. "When you are trying to ascertain the general thinking of the time, these newspapers are essential," he says. "Because you can do things with ProQuest Historical Newspapers—Black Newspapers that weren't possible before, I'm convinced that the collection will spur additional research and scholarship," he says.



## For more information about ProQuest Historical Newspapers

or to sign up for a FREE TRIAL, call 800-521-0600, extension 3344; email [pqsales@proquest.com](mailto:pqsales@proquest.com); or visit [www.proquest.com](http://www.proquest.com) today.