

## ***Ebony's* Era Bell Thompson Travels the World To Tell the Story**

By Jinx Coleman Broussard  
and Skye Chance Cooley

*This article identifies and examines the works of Era Bell Thompson, a foreign correspondent at a time when women and African Americans were not traditionally found in those positions. A textual analysis of approximately thirty articles Thompson wrote for Ebony magazine between 1953 and 1974 found she educated readers about the history, geography and culture of the places she covered; and she juxtaposed race relations and developments abroad that affected people of color worldwide with what was happening in the United States. Liberation movements in African and Caribbean nations, as well as personal and professional achievements of black people abroad, also figured prominently in Thompson's foreign correspondence. She stressed reconciliation and integration and offered that conflicts in developing nations and racism everywhere could be overcome through collective efforts that would lead to advancement of all people of color. Thompson's work is significant because her foreign correspondence framed blacks worldwide positively when the black press believed mainstream press international reporting either ignored or framed them negatively. By illuminating Thompson's work and perspective, this article elevates an obscure, pioneering female African American in journalism history and contributes to the discourse on the elite area of foreign correspondence.*

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**E**ra Bell Thompson broke new ground when she reported from Africa for three months in 1953 for *Ebony* magazine, for she joined the ranks of journalism's elite foreign correspondents. Her ascendancy to the role of foreign correspondent

## **Death and Communists: The Funeral Industry's Attack on Jessica Mitford's *The American Way of Death***

By Sharon Crook West and Joseph P. McKerns

*When Jessica Mitford's The American Way of Death hit bookshelves, the American funeral industry reacted as if it had been nailed into one of its own gilded hardwood coffins. "She's a communist," they cried, "and a crackpot as well!" The industry launched a campaign reminiscent of the McCarthy era, attacking Mitford's credibility as well as that of her husband, attorney Robert Treuhافت, on grounds of their associations with the Communist Party. But the industry's ill-prepared spokesmen did little to discredit Mitford's devastating reporting, much of which quoted directly publications of the "dismal trade" itself. Piling on were the likes of ultra-conservatives California Congressman James B. Utt and Albert F. Canwell, a one-term Washington legislator who launched his own anti-Mitford campaign. Despite a flurry of efforts to discredit Mitford and her book, traditional news media generally reviewed the book positively and rejected the anti-Mitford charges. In part this was because it was a clumsy effort; more likely it was that news media, in the recent wake of the McCarthy hearings, were more cautious in embracing such claims.*

Jessica Mitford loved a fight and she got all she bargained for when she took on the funeral industry in *The American Way of Death* in 1963.<sup>1</sup> It was a glorious battle of words. The funeral directors described the traditional American funeral as a "beautiful memory picture;" Mitford described it as "the pickled and prettified corpse arranged in a suitably costly box." They called themselves "pro

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## In Their Own Voices: Women Redefine and Frame Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

By Kathleen Endres

*This article investigates how women-run newspapers and newsletters covered the sex amendment of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The study utilizes framing analysis to examine the editorial content of feminist publications from 1968, when the EEOC adopted regulations designed to implement the sex amendment of Title VII, until 1973, when the Supreme Court struck down First Amendment rights for commercial speech, which forced the restructuring of help-wanted classified advertising in daily newspapers. This time period also covers the beginnings of feminist journalism of the second wave of the women's movement. The study looks at two types of periodicals: NOW newsletters and news service and publications of the radical wing of the women's movement. This analysis reveals that NOW newsletters and news service framed the sex amendment of Title VII as a matter of justice and equality and, in the process, linked the matter to the broader civil rights movement through the rhetorical devices used. This article outlines the deep divisions within the women's movement of the time. The publications of the radical feminists covered the story but ignored NOW, its members and its activities, thus symbolically annihilating the organization and its involvement in the fight for implementing the sex amendment. Other radical publications concentrated on editorially disavowing NOW and its limited focus. Only the readers themselves—through letters to the editor—brought up the news of the sex amendment of Title VII.*

When President Lyndon Baines Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, there was little coverage in women-run newspapers, magazines or newsletters. It was not because this act was unimportant to women. After all, this was the first time the word "sex" had been added to a federal Civil Rights act. Under Title VII, it became unlawful for employers to indicate "any

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# The Long and Strong Tradition of State Protection of Freedom of the Press

By Joe Mathewson

*The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution did not initiate protection of the press, even in the United States, nor is it on the cutting edge of press freedom today. Freedom of the press was first conceived and stated in the constitutions of most of the original states, all enacted before Independence. Most of them stated an affirmative right to publish, and today nearly all state constitutions do. The First Amendment, adopted years later than those original constitutions, was comparatively weak. Not until the middle of the twentieth century did the Supreme Court interpret the First Amendment as guaranteeing a right to publish, and today federal law still lags behind the states' in its failure to protect journalists from revealing confidential sources in legal proceedings.*

## Introduction

Even before Independence, Americans conceived, for the first time in human history, the idea that the press should be free, especially to criticize government. This novel and noble ideal was codified in the constitutions of the first states, and the states have applied and nourished freedom of the press ever since. By contrast, the Press Clause of the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment, adopted after the first states took their stand, was weaker and limited. Moreover, it was soon totally disregarded by Congress when lawmakers passed the most repressive anti-press law in the nation's history. More than a century later the Press Clause still was virtually ignored by the Supreme Court. Nevertheless, for two decades in the latter half of the twentieth century the Press Clause was re-interpreted and so strengthened by the Court, sometimes following the states, that the legal concept of freedom of the press became commonly regarded as "First Amendment

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