

Movement Journalism 101



A ZINE BY
PRESS | ON

What is movement journalism?



Movement journalism is journalism in service to liberation.



Movement journalism is accountable to social movements, centers the experiences of systematically oppressed people, and exposes the root causes of harm and injustice.



Movement journalism is transparent and evidence-based, seeking and sharing stories with curiosity and mutual respect for the purpose of transformative social change.

Who founded movement journalism?

A group of Southern LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC journalists, storytellers, and community organizers coined the term in 2017 while producing the report “**Out of Struggle: Strengthening and expanding movement journalism in the South**” for Project South (an Atlanta-based community organization). This led to the formation of Press On in 2018 who popularized the term and practice of movement journalism. However, the practice has existed in the so-called “United States” for at least two centuries. Movement journalism has served as a critical tool of Black freedom struggles and other social justice movements.

For example, in the 19th century, a number of **abolitionist newspapers** were created to advocate for the abolition of chattel slavery in the U.S. At the turn of the 20th century, **Ida B. Wells-Barnett** investigated racial terror lynchings and published them via the Black Press. And in the 1950s, **Marvel Cooke** went undercover to investigate the exploitation of Black domestic workers in New York City.



Image of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, artwork by billy dee

How is movement journalism different from mainstream journalism?

Mainstream journalism is often...
Exploitative
Extractive
Centers authoritative voices (e.g., police, government officials)
Centers objectivity/neutrality at all costs—even when it causes harm
Encourages parachute journalism—when a reporter “parachutes” into a community & covers a story without having the proper context or existing relationships/ties with said community

Movement journalism aims to...

Foster collaboration between journalists, organizers & their communities, resulting in authentic, trusting long-term relationships

Be accountable to & in solidarity with grassroots justice movements

Center the voices of the most impacted within communities

Recognize that objectivity is a myth (i.e., all journalists' work is influenced by their identities, beliefs & lived experiences)

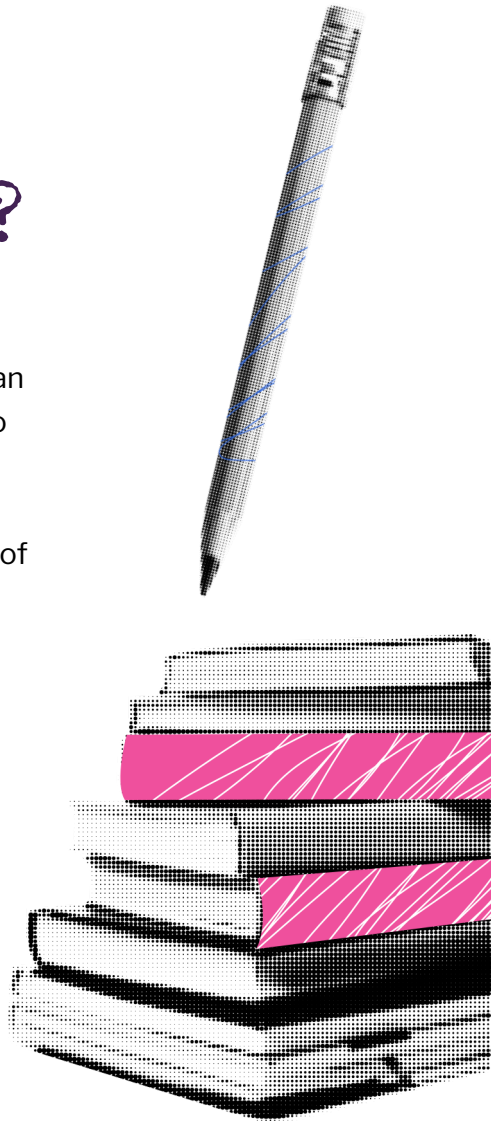
Provide training and resources to oppressed communities to tell their own stories and to journalists seeking to be in principled solidarity



Image of Monica Roberts, artwork by billy dee

Who can become a movement journalist?

Anyone who commits “acts of journalism” in service of liberation can identify as a movement journalist, no formal training required! This could mean anything from livestreaming a protest to recording the oral history of a movement elder to creating informational flyers for community meetings. Movement journalism is understood to be a set of practices that anyone can learn and use, not a fortress accessible to a select few.



Movement Journalists Commit To:



Harm Reduction: We strive to reduce harm and challenge dynamics of exploitation and extraction in our reporting. We work to eliminate hierarchies between editors, reporters, and sources.



Root Cause Analysis and Context: We take time to understand historical context and develop political analysis alongside communities. Our reporting digs into the root causes of oppression and honors histories and current practices of resistance.



Collaboration and Skill-sharing: We build deep relationships within the communities we cover, reporting collaboratively and centering the voices of oppressed people. We make the tools of journalism accessible through skill-sharing, and we share information and insight with social movement leaders and organizers so that strategy and reporting can develop simultaneously.



Challenging Oppression: We commit to challenging oppression in all its forms, in ourselves, interpersonally, in the organizations we build, and through our practice of journalism. This is lifelong work that requires vulnerability and constant learning and unlearning.



Envisioning Liberation: We create stories that facilitate radical rethinking and imagination, uplift visionary work, and celebrate community resistance.



What are some examples of movement journalism?

HISTORICAL EXAMPLES

1930s-1960s

Claudia Jones—a Trinidadian-born journalist who got deported from NYC to London due to her socialist beliefs—wrote articles about the triple oppression experienced by Black women in the workforce and founded the first major Black newspaper in Britain, the *West Indian Gazette*.

1968-1976, 1988-1990

A group of young Atlanta activists ran an underground newspaper in Atlanta called ***The Great Speckled Bird***, covering the grassroots justice movements of the day: “In this world of corporate bigness, greed, private interest, exploitation, and cynicism, the BIRD stands in opposition, trying to tell the truth that doesn't fit into the established interests' world and trying to help build a consciousness and a movement to change this country and the world.”

2006-2020

Until her untimely death in 2020, Monica Roberts—a Black trans journalist and advocate based in Houston, TX— ran the blog, ***TransGriot*** (transgriot.blogspot.com), one of the first media outlets to cover trans issues left out of the mainstream, such as the epidemic of violence against trans women of color.

PRESENT-DAY EXAMPLES



JIMPRO Community Media

(jimprocommunitymedia.org): A grassroots nonprofit in Western North Carolina that empowers immigrant communities by sharing vital information and resources to improve their well-being. Trains community members to become reporters.



Mainline (mainlineatl.com): A women-led, independent magazine based in Atlanta, Ga., whose mission is to disrupt the ideas held in status quo and corporatized media.



Migrant Roots Media

(migrantrootsmedia.org): A multilingual, multimedia platform that seeks to unearth the root causes of planetary migration through the voices of migrants, children of migrants, and those struggling to stay and thrive in their homelands.



Prism (prismreports.org): A national independent and nonprofit news outlet led by journalists of color. Reports from the ground up and at the intersections of injustice.



Shift Press (shift.press): A Houston, TX youth publication that provides news and journalism training to encourage youth civic engagement and build toward a “healthier, better educated, and more prosperous Houston.”

Where can I find out more about movement journalism?

Movement Journalism 101 Resources & Readings

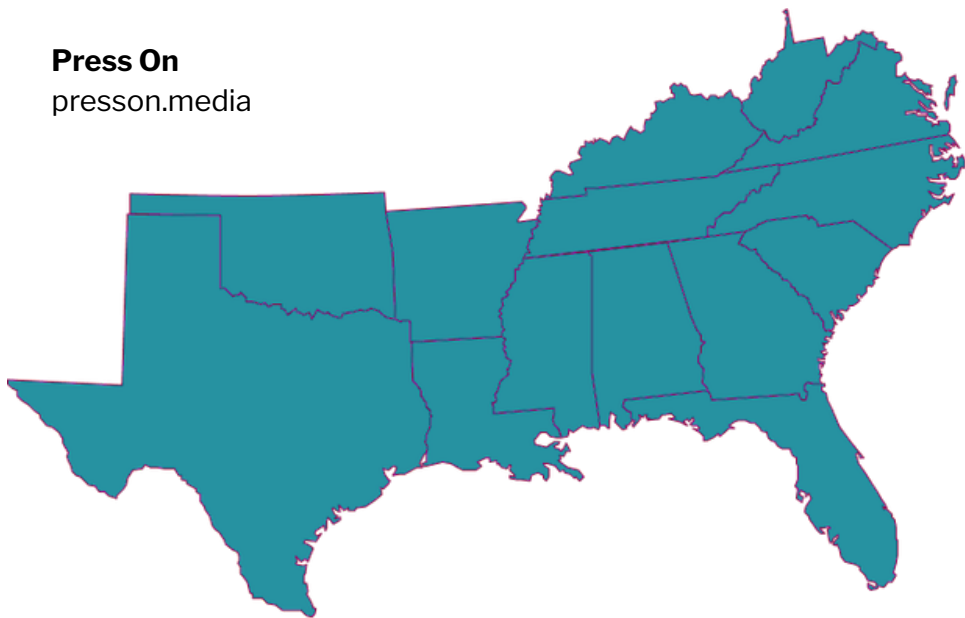
bit.ly/mj101resources

Movement Media Alliance

movement-media.org

Press On

presson.media



Who made this zine?

Press On is a Southern media collective that catalyzes change and advances justice through the practice of movement journalism.

We are journalists, storytellers, and organizers rooted in, and practicing solidarity with, oppressed communities that birth social movements. We are based in the South, and we strive to uphold Southern traditions of storytelling that have long resisted the systems of extraction, exploitation, and colonization that have defined mainstream journalism.

By providing a diverse set of resources, including trainings, fellowships and opportunities for network-building, Press On aims to help journalists and storytellers produce reporting that's driven by communities that are building power to create transformative social change.

PRESS | ON

730 Peachtree St STE 570

Atlanta GA 30308

presson.media

