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Violently Amorous: The *Jackson Advocate*, The *Atlanta Daily World*, and the Limits of Syndication

by Thomas Aiello

On Saturday night, February 27, 1943, Percy Greene, editor and publisher of the *Jackson Advocate*, went to his office on Farish Street, the hub of Jackson, Mississippi's black business district. He had been hearing rumors that day involving Edward Tademey, principal of the Smith Robertson School. Smith Robertson, the first and most prominent public high school for Jackson's black residents, was the alma mater of Richard Wright and the symbol of progressive education in the city, marking Tademey as a public figure. The principal, according to the talk wafting through Jackson's nightlife, made unwanted advances to a group of women from Jackson College who were working at the school, which also served as a World War II ration station. Tademey promised the women jobs, telling them he would fire the existing faculty. Then he became "violently amorous," advancing on one of the women "until her dress was almost torn off and she screamed for help."¹ It was juicy Saturday night gossip, and it was everywhere. So Greene decided to publish it.

Greene founded the *Advocate* in 1938, but in October 1940 he joined the Scott Newspaper Syndicate (SNS) based in Atlanta. The SNS provided syndicated material for the *Advocate* and printed the newspaper on Auburn Avenue, Atlanta's version of Farish Street. So when Tademey sued for libel, he sued the Scotts. The resulting case spent the next three years in the courts, and in the process helped define both the scope of responsibility for newspaper syndicates and the limits of their influence. The black press in Mississippi and the South served a rural, impoverished population and relied on syndicates such as SNS to tie them to information networks throughout the South. Thus the case proved vitally important not just for Jackson or Atlanta, but for all the rural areas that relied on black southern syndication. The suit also demonstrated the inherent risk that syndicates took in accepting local news content without verification of its accuracy.

Mississippi's black press began in the aftermath of the Civil War, developing in fits and starts through Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, finally maintaining a legitimately strong presence in the early decades of the 1900s. In the first half of

¹ *Jackson Advocate*, March 6, 1943, 3.

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the twentieth century, the visibility of the black press in Mississippi began to recede. The eighty-seven papers that existed between 1900 and 1920 became eighteen by 1940. By 1953, there were only eleven. Without urban centers, and with a virtual apartheid system in place in Mississippi, the ability of the black press to survive was dramatically hindered. Since there was no real black middle class in the state outside of a small urban core, there was no real way to make black journalism profitable. Most editors and publishers had other jobs as doctors or teachers or often as Baptist or Methodist ministers.²

Prior to 1954 only seven Mississippi towns had more than four black newspapers in their histories. Of the 116 black newspapers published in the first eight decades of the twentieth century, sixty-nine came from the same seven towns: Vicksburg, Natchez, Meridian, Jackson, Hattiesburg, Greenville, and Mound Bayou. The average newspaper circulation was between 500 and 1,000, a far cry from the numbers of larger papers in cities outside of Mississippi. But historian Julius Eric Thompson argues that information sharing in rural areas ensured that passing newspapers from one person to another increased the number of readers.³

The newspapers focused their interest on segregation, voting rights, and lynching. But Mississippi's stifling racism did not allow editors to inveigh against such injustices. Instead, the papers typically reprinted wire stories about such issues. Social news, church updates, and entertainment information usually dominated their pages. Thompson notes that what advocacy existed "shows them subscribing to the school of thought of Booker T. Washington."⁴

The *Jackson Advocate*, under the leadership of Greene, for example, highlighted black success stories and often criticized black Mississippians for contributing to their own problems, such as the tenuous state of black health. In late 1941, Greene's editorials called on his readers to better their health so they would not have to rely

² The roar of the 1920s didn't really reach black Mississippi, but the Great Depression of the 1930s certainly did, eroding a black press that was already struggling. Only thirty-three black periodicals existed in Mississippi in the decade and only fifteen of them were commercial presses, most housed in Jackson. (Fifteen commercial, six religious, two fraternal, ten educational). It was a significant decline considering the growth in the early century. In the 1890s, there were forty-six black periodicals. In the 1910s, there were sixty-six. Julius Eric Thompson, *The Black Press In Mississippi, 1865-1985* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 16; Julius Eric Thompson, "Mississippi," in *The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979*, ed. Henry Lewis Suggs, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 177-210; Caryl A. Cooper, "Percy Greene and the *Jackson Advocate*," in *The Press and Race: Mississippi Journalists Confront the Movement*, ed. David R. Davies (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 56-57; Charles A. Simmons, *The African-American Press, with Special Reference to Four Newspapers, 1827-1965* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1998), 63. For more on the publications emanating from Mississippi during this period, see the Mississippi section of the Ayer newspaper directories, which began in 1880 and continued through the civil rights movement. For example, *N. W. Ayer & Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals, 1943* (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Son, Inc., 1943).

³ Thompson, "Mississippi," 181-182; and "Oral History with Mr. Percy Greene," University of Southern Mississippi Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, <http://digilib.usm.edu/cdm/ref/collection/coh/id/2796>, accessed August 6, 2014.

⁴ Thompson, "Mississippi," 182-183.

on a white medical establishment that was not always interested in helping them. He also inveighed against black-on-black crime. White police were not inclined to deal with such disputes, so black behavior needed to improve on its own, Greene said. When the paper mentioned equality, it did not seek integration, it argued, instead, for equal standards within the segregated system. Editorials urged that black teachers, for example, deserved equitable pay in relation to their white counterparts. The *Advocate* spent much of its time railing against Germany and Japan and supporting the war effort, but was not shy about reminding readers that fighting for equality at home was a logical outgrowth of fighting for equality overseas. It was, like most papers in Mississippi, dedicated to endorsing protestant Christianity as the ultimate saving grace of all sufferers at home and abroad. Such was the *Advocate's* method—urging readers to solve their own problems with health and crime, rather than arguing for better treatment from white doctors and police, and arguing for equal pay in the segregated educational system rather than the end of segregation. This approach insulated the paper from potential white anger or reprisal for stances that whites might find too radical. White Mississippians had a low bar for what they deemed radical. Thompson argued that “Greene was caught between the old Booker T. Washington position of economic emphasis versus a strong demand [from his readers] that discrimination should end at once.”⁵

The *Advocate* quoted Washington's Atlanta Compromise regularly, but, significantly, it was under Greene's leadership that the *Advocate* became the most radical paper in the state, calling for black voting rights and political participation. That too was a Washingtonian strategy. Editorials calling for voting rights were understandable to whites (though not popular) and did not require increased contact between the races. Thus such editorial positions were considered relatively safe ground. They allowed Greene with plausibility to convince his readers that he had their best interests in mind and white politicians that he could steer black public opinion away from integrationist demands. Greene often lobbied in his newspaper for the Mississippi state legislature to fix problems with race relations in the city and state. At the same time, however, he assured whites that his motives included the best interests of both races of Mississippians. And so, as Thompson pointed out, Greene was a paradoxical figure who argued for black rights without really arguing for the renunciation of Mississippi's conservative political system. It bears repeating

⁵ Thompson, “Mississippi,” 182-184; Freda Darlene Lewis, “The *Jackson Advocate*: The Rise and Eclipse of a Leading Black Newspaper in Mississippi, 1939-1964” (MS thesis: Iowa State University, 1984), 14-31; and Colleen R. White, “The *Jackson Advocate*: 1938-1995, A Historical Overview” (MA thesis: University of Mississippi, 1996), 25-28.

that in Mississippi, the *Advocate* was the radical newspaper.⁶

Greene was born in 1898, a native of Jackson who developed in an age of Jim Crow, when Booker Washington was the model of black southern activism. He graduated from high school and took some collegiate classes at Jackson College before migrating north to various points in the Midwest, before serving in the first World War. After his honorable discharge, Greene returned to Jackson and fell into journalism not because of training or longstanding desire, but rather because he had been barred by racism from other options such as the law.⁷

Greene's paper had "a wide circulation and has several thousand subscribers in Jackson, Mississippi and in its immediate vicinity," as explained in court filings. It was "circulated by mail, by delivery to its subscribers, by newsboys on the streets, by sales at news stand, and otherwise, and is and was read by thousands of persons over a wide territory."⁸ Without any formal circulation numbers for the *Advocate*, it is impossible to know exactly how many people read the paper or were influenced by its news coverage. Still, the number of potential readers was large. Jackson's black population was just under 25,000 and Hinds County's was just over 55,000. There were more than a million black residents in the state. The potential influence of the *Jackson Advocate* was extensive.⁹ In his testimony during the original libel trial, Edward Tademý explained that the paper was circulated widely in Laurel and

⁶ Thompson, "Mississippi," 184-185. Booker Washington would do much the same thing. He believed that white southern intransigence was such that there was no fundamental advantage for advocating publicly and dramatically for rights. He had many examples at his disposal to prove his point. In such a situation, the only way to fight was to grow stronger within the paradigm, rather than trying to change the paradigm itself, just as a military unit would wait for reinforcements when hopelessly outmanned. "I do not favor the Negro's giving up anything which is fundamental and which has been guaranteed to him by the Constitution," he argued. "It is not best for him to relinquish his rights; nor would his doing so be best for the Southern white man." Still, there was a fundamental difference between relinquishment and outright advocacy. Overreach could only set everything back. But advocacy was something Washington was willing to do. He spoke to the Louisiana legislature in 1898, for example, urging them to reconsider the state's grandfather clause. He also organized and raised money for the cause behind the scenes. He did the same for Alabama's voting restrictions in 1901. He provided funds for anti-discrimination railroad suits and for suits challenging jury exclusion. He also funded the successful challenge to southern debt peonage. When it came to political participation, Washington considered rights talk fair game, but stopped at the water's edge of social participation. Louis R. Harlan, "The Secret Life of Booker T. Washington," *Journal of Southern History* 37 (August 1971): 393-416.

⁷ Cooper, "Percy Greene and the *Jackson Advocate*," 60-61; Simmons, *The African-American Press*, 64-65; and "Oral History with Mr. Percy Greene."

⁸ "Complaint" in Transcript of Record, United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, *Tademý v. Scott*, No. 2701, Civil Action, 5-6. *Atlanta Daily World* records, 1931-1996, No. 1092, Box 25, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA (hereinafter cited as "Complaint").

⁹ Most, however, could only read at an elementary school level. Only four percent of black Mississippians had completed a year of high school. *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population*, Vol. 2, part 4, *Minnesota-New Mexico* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1943), 199-308; and Julius E. Thompson, *Percy Greene and the Jackson Advocate: The Life and Times of a Radical Conservative Black Newspaperman, 1897-1977* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1994), 27-28.

Hattiesburg, roughly ninety miles away.¹⁰

The black population was generally impoverished, particularly at the onset of the Great Depression; however, a legitimate if small middle class had developed, particularly in Greene's Jackson, which had its share of Washingtonian economic havens such as branches of the National Negro Business League and Black Chamber of Commerce.¹¹ Though Jackson's black middle class was large enough that the majority of Greene's advertisers were black businesses, white advertisers still made up a critical part of the *Advocate's* business.¹²

That made towing the racial line all the more important for the publisher. Greene and his newspaper were already lightning rods for controversy in the early 1900s and remained so in the decades to come, but controversy usually was generated within his own community. For example, while Greene supported the integration of the military during World War II, he opposed A. Philip Randolph's proposed March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1941 to gain integration. Militancy only threatened white attitudes, he believed, and the state of black progress rested on cultivating white benevolence. Though he was a tireless champion of black voting rights, he remained a Washingtonian accommodationist on most other civil rights issues, frustrating activists and his readers throughout the state.¹³

Greene's status in the community had grown since his newspaper's founding. He was a Mason, an Elk, and a Knight of Pythias. He volunteered with the Selective Service System in the early years of World War II. He even maintained a correspondence with James W. Silver, head of the University of Mississippi history department, who wanted copies of the *Advocate* for his students to read at the state's venerated lily-white institution. Of course, his success did not come without controversy, as in the months following his Tademy editorials when the FBI began investigating whether or not Greene was receiving kickbacks for his Selective Service work.¹⁴

On March 6, 1943, Greene found himself mired in controversy for simply commenting on the local talk of the town in his editorial column, "Up and Down

¹⁰ In addition, Greene's original "report," if it can be called such, came from widespread public gossip that existed prior to the publications. "Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Edward Tademy on Direct Examination," Transcript of Record, United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, *Tademy v. Scott*, No. 2701, Civil Action, 68-69. *Atlanta Daily World* records, 1931-1996, No. 1092, Box 25, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.

¹¹ Cooper, "Percy Greene and the *Jackson Advocate*," 62; and Thompson, *Percy Greene and the Jackson Advocate*, 28-29.

¹² Julius Thompson analyzed issues surrounding this event, one in December 1942 and another in August 1943. In the December 1942 issue, 62% of the *Advocate's* advertisements were from black businesses, 38% from white businesses. In August 1943, the ration was 82% and 18%. Thompson, *Percy Greene and the Jackson Advocate*, 29-30.

¹³ Cooper, "Percy Greene and the *Jackson Advocate*," 62-63; and Julius E. Thompson, *Black Life in Mississippi: Essays on Political, Social and Cultural Studies in a Deep South State* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001), 23-34.

¹⁴ Greene was a volunteer for the Mississippi Selective Service System, helping people register. The allegations, never proven (the case was ultimately dropped), centered around Greene charging fees for helping potential registrants fill out their paperwork. Thompson, *Percy Greene and the Jackson Advocate*, 30-32.

Farish Street.”

“FARISH STREET SATURDAY NIGHT: The Ole Ave. was agog with gossip Saturday night as everywhere folks were asking one another and me ‘have you heard about Fessor’ Tademy, the principal of Smith Roberson School and then for fear that I had not herd and to be sure that I would hear they’ed began telling one of the most revolting stories of moral degeneracy and depovity regarding the Principal of Smith Robinson School.”¹⁵

Greene explained that a group of young women were assisting at the school while people were registering for one of the ration books issued by the federal government during World War II. “After making amorous advances to the many of them to whom he gave his telephone number for future contacts,” wrote Greene, “supported by his promise that he was going to get rid of most of the teachers next year and give them all a job with the last one to enter his room he became so violently amorous [sic], until she resisted his advances he cought [sic] her with such persistence until her dress was almost torn off and she screamed for help.”

It was, he admitted, just a rumor being bandied about on Farish Street, but it seemed to be discussed by everyone. “In Professor Tademy’s case I am inclined to the old adage of ‘Where there is so much smoke there is bound to be some fire,’ and to every parent in the city of Jackson who looks to the school as an aid in installing into their children the finer virtues of manhood and womanhood the usefulness of Professor Tademy as Principal of Smith Robinson [sic] School and as a teacher in the Jackson public school system is over.” The onus for action was now on the school superintendent. “Professor Cobbins, despite of the reluctance that he might have to act against Professor Tademy on a ‘Morals’ charge, as Supervisor of Negro schools must now come face to face with the delemma [sic] continued in the injunction, ‘Judge ye not less ye also be judged,’” he argued. “Upon the failure of Prof. Cobbins to act immediately in the case of Prof. Tademy the Negro citizens of Jackson should carry the case to Prof. Walker less these periodic outburst of stories of moral laxity [sic] regarding school teachers be reflected in the lack of high moral and spiritual influence of the schools.”¹⁶

It was a damning exposé, but also an unsourced editorial that was devastating to Edward Tademy. Greene, however, was not done. The following week, he published another screed on the subject, this time with far more venom than amusement. “Everybody was still talking about ‘Fessor’ Tademy who, as more and more is heard about his approaches upon those young girls over at Smith Robinson [sic] school the other day, justifies the ‘Hep Cats,’ up and down the Ole Ave. in comically referring to him now as ‘Fessor Tademy The Great Lover.’” So while

¹⁵ The spelling errors are original to Greene’s editorial. *Jackson Advocate*, March 6, 1943, 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

there was still some amusement, Greene's frustration was real. "What most folks wanted to know was what was going to be done in 'Fessor' Tademy's case and the best I could do was tell them what I heard that 'Fessor' Cobbins, The Supervisor of Negro Schools said about the case when the Principal of the schools asked him about what he was gonna do. 'Fessor' Cobbins when the question was put up and said that he couldn't act cause 'Fessor' Tademy's case hadn't been 'OFFICIALLY BROUGHT TO MY ATTENTION'.

"When I said that a couple of folks with children going to school one of them up and said, MY LORD ABOVE what kind of official notice does 'Fessor' Gobbins [sic] want other than a public and disgraceful scandal that grown folks, children, and everybody else is talking about up and down the streets of the city. One fellow says to me if that kinda story was to start about a teacher on the other side of the fence he would have had to leave town on the first train, and said further that now Tademy ought to be put out, and a lot of cleaning up ought to be done around Lanier High School. I hated to hear him mention Lanier High School on the account of my friend Prof. Sanders being the Principal out there and whose personal character I see as above reproach. Which led me to wish that he was in a position of greater authority so as to exert a greater influence on the whole Negro Public School System."

This was not personal, urged Greene, "but sometime when you get too close to a thing you can't see as somebody standing way off looking, and the reason folks try to show people things sometimes is to help and not hurt and ain't nothing never beat criticism and especially the kind that make folks mad." There were other problems at Smith Robertson. "There are a number of houses of shady reputation in the vicinity of the school where the students hang out when they ought to be in class or study; that there are too many girl students permitted to leave and return to the school after unlimited experiences of marriage and otherwise. And too much 'Society and Fraternalizing' of students and teachers." There was, to Greene's mind, only one viable solution. "Sometime you can't help an old house with paint, you just have to tear off some old and put on some new boards."¹⁷

Edward Tademy was the principal of Smith Robertson and the president of the Eighth Educational District of the Mississippi Association of Teachers in Colored Schools. He began his teaching career in St. Joseph, Louisiana, but spent the bulk of his time, before becoming principal at Smith Robertson, in Hattiesburg, where he taught for ten years before moving to Jackson. There he joined the Central Methodist

¹⁷ *Jackson Advocate*, March 13, 1943, 3.

Episcopal Church, where he taught Sunday School.¹⁸ He had been married to his wife Rhoda for sixteen years.¹⁹ He was, by all prior accounts, an upstanding citizen.

On February 27, the Eighth Educational District of the Mississippi Association of Teachers in Colored Schools was hosting a meeting, the theme of which was “Educating for Victory and Freedom.” It was an important event with representatives from the five counties that comprised the district.²⁰ Greene, too, was at the meeting. Sitting on the dais, he noticed the teachers laughing to themselves and pointing at Tademy, who presided over the meeting, rose to speak. This was not completely surprising. Tademy was short and fat and incredibly nearsighted, and his appearance was often the butt of jokes.²¹ Unfortunately for the principal, however, the laughter was not the result of his looks. Even without Greene’s questions, the teachers at that meeting were talking about the incident at Smith Robertson. It was, according to the editor, the predominant subject at meetings.²²

So Greene went to the college to verify the stories, then “to several other people who by that time—everybody was talking about it, in the pool rooms in the neighborhoods, my wife, and everybody else was talking about it.” Jackson College’s dean, Henry T. Sampson, told Greene “that everyone of those girls had made report that Professor Tademy had made some advance to them, and that it was unfortunate that they had told it and they had been unable to squash it, but it got out to be common rumor all over town.”²³

Tademy felt that he had to do something. In September 1943, he filed suit in federal district court asking for \$25,000 in actual and punitive damages in response to Greene’s claims that Tademy had “made love to several high school students

¹⁸ “I had taught school in Hattiesburg for ten years,” Tademy claimed in testimony, “and when I left one of the members of the PTA said they couldn’t know whether I was a man or woman because I didn’t flirt with the other women around.” “Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Edward Tademy on Direct Examination,” 64-65, 70.

¹⁹ “Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Rhoda Tademy on Direct Examination,” Transcript of Record, United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, *Tademy v. Scott*, No. 2701, Civil Action, 91-92. *Atlanta Daily World* records, 1931-1996, No. 1092, Box 25, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.

²⁰ The five counties that comprised the Eighth Educational District of the Mississippi Association of Teachers in Colored Schools were Hinds, Yazoo, Warren, Rankin, and Madison. *Atlanta Daily World*, February 12, 1943, 3; and *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 13, 1943, 17.

²¹ “Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Irma Anderson Norman on Direct Examination,” Transcript of Record, United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, *Tademy v. Scott*, No. 2701, Civil Action, 125. *Atlanta Daily World* records, 1931-1996, No. 1092, Box 25, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.

²² “Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Percy Greene on Direct Examination,” Transcript of Record, United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, *Tademy v. Scott*, No. 2701, Civil Action, 110-112. *Atlanta Daily World* records, 1931-1996, No. 1092, Box 25, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.

²³ “Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Percy Greene on Direct Examination,” 110-112.

when they were signing up for Ration Book No. 2.”²⁴ Just how the damages were described was significant, because the hit to Tademý’s reputation was not all encompassing. At the time of the suit, he was still the principal of Smith Robertson, still president of the Eighth Educational District of the Mississippi Association of Teachers in Colored Schools, and even assistant secretary of the Jackson Negro Christmas Cheer Club.²⁵ Tademý’s complaint argued that the articles “expos[ed] him to public hatred, contempt and ridicule.” Such was the case for punitive damages. He also claimed that the articles “reflected upon the professional integrity of plaintiff and tended to inure and damage plaintiff in his profession,” though that would be much harder to prove.²⁶

His lawsuit, however, was not directed at Percy Greene, who wrote the articles and edited the *Jackson Advocate*. Instead, the defendant was the *Atlanta Daily World*, or, technically, “the estate of W. A. Scott, deceased,” and thus each member of his surviving family, led by his brother C. A. Scott, who headed both the *World* and its Scott Newspaper Syndicate and served as administrator of the founder’s will.²⁷

William Alexander Scott, Jr., was born in 1902 in Edwards, Mississippi, the second son of Reverend William Alexander Scott, a pastor of the Christian church, and his wife. He originally attended Edwards public schools before moving to Jackson to continue his education. His father moved to the big city to create the Ferry Street Christian Church, and in 1914, the young W. A. was the first person baptized in the

²⁴ Tademý’s lawyer was Ross Robert Barnett, the man who would later become Mississippi’s infamous fire-eating segregationist governor. Barnett often worked for black clients in his practice. In fact, his first case as a practicing lawyer was for a black client. “I was employed by a Negro woman named Coressa Jones, to sue for the value of a side saddle. And Senator L. L. Posey defended the case.” Her ex-husband, George Jones, had the side saddle in his possession and I filed a replevin suit for the side saddle, valued at \$ 12.50. She paid me, I think it was, \$ 7.50 to take the case, so I argued for nearly half a day and lost the case before the Justice of the Peace.” Barnett appealed to the County Court. “And I went on and took a judgment for Ole Creecy Jones and she and George both were my clients from then on.” “Oral History with the Honorable Ross Robert Barnett, Former Governor of the State of Mississippi,” University of Southern Mississippi Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, <http://digilib.usm.edu/cdm/ref/collection/coh/id/8391>, accessed August 7, 2014; and *Chicago Defender*, November 20, 1943, 8.

²⁵ The Christmas Cheer Club provided food baskets to needy families during the holidays. *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 27, 1943, 14; and *Chicago Defender*, December 4, 1943, 19. Tademý would ultimately relinquish the presidency of the Eighth Educational District of the Mississippi Association of Teachers in Colored Schools the following year, at the group’s 1944 meeting at the Southern Christian Institute in Edwards, Mississippi. The change in leadership was not the result of the *Advocate* controversy, but rather the normal rotational course of power transitions. *Chicago Defender*, March 11, 1944, 5.

²⁶ “Complaint,” 4, 6-7.

²⁷ *Chicago Defender*, November 20, 1943, 8; and “Docket 2701, *Edward Tademý v. C. A. Scott as Administrator with will annexed of the estate of W. A. Scott, deceased, et. al.*,” Clerk U. S. District Court, 2501-2750, Civil Actions, Vol. 130, National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta, Georgia, RG No. 021, Stack Area AP, Row 19, Compartment 27, Shelf 06 [hereinafter cited as “Docket 2701”].

new venue.²⁸ The elder Scott was also a printer, building the William Alexander Scott building on Farish Street to house his Progressive Printing Company. Greene was a boyhood friend of the brothers W. A. and Cornelius "C. A." Scott, and their father's business was Greene's first exposure to black publishing. Ultimately, the Scotts would complete their secondary education at the high school department of Jackson College, just a few short years behind their friend Percy.²⁹

W. A. later transferred to Morehouse in Atlanta, and there, with the help of C. A., he began his small four-page weekly, the first issue appearing on August 5, 1928. In 1930, the *World* became a semi-weekly, and in January of the following year, Scott formed the Southern Newspaper Syndicate. In April 1932, the *World* became a tri-weekly along with several of the Syndicate companion papers, among them the *Chattanooga Tribune*, *Birmingham World*, and *Memphis World*. Finally, on March 13, 1932, the *World* became a daily. When the syndicate's reach began drifting beyond the bounds of the South in 1933, Scott changed its name to the Scott Newspaper Syndicate. The next year, in February 1934, W. A. was murdered, and his brother took over the company.³⁰ At the time of his death, the syndicate owned one daily, two semi-weeklies, and printed more than fifty other weekly papers that blanketed the South and parts of the Midwest. Its scope had diminished by 1943, totaling roughly sixteen newspapers, but it still remained influential, particularly in Scott's hometown, where his boyhood friend edited a paper that was part of the group.³¹

At odds in the case was the nature of black press syndication in the 1940s. The Scotts and their *Atlanta Daily World* did not "own, publish, manage or control the Jackson Advocate." Instead, Percy Greene and his staff wrote articles and editorials about the local news in central Mississippi, generated advertisements from

²⁸ His father, a Ph.D., an educator, and a fraternal leader along with being a minister, would later move to east Tennessee, where he preached at Jonesboro, Washington, and ultimately at West Main Street Christian Church in Johnson City. His son's membership would move there with his father, as there was no church of that denomination in Atlanta. *Atlanta Daily World*, February 8, 1934, 1, February 11, 1934, 8.

²⁹ Thompson, *Percy Greene and the Jackson Advocate*, 25-26.

³⁰ The murder of Scott was never solved, and the drama surrounding its investigation demonstrated the interconnected web of the black upper class in Atlanta and the volatility of those connections, particularly the connections between news, finance, insurance, and real estate. Those connections would only become stronger in the difficult early years of the Depression, which simultaneously made the stakes even higher for protecting wealth and ensuring a place in the volatile market. That interconnectedness insulated everyone and also ensured that they were protected from criminal prosecution in the event of a crime like Scott's murder. It was a situation that those on Farish Street almost certainly understood. The head of the largest black bank in Atlanta had a financial stake in the Scott estate, as did the most prominent black lawyer. Ultimately, the brother of Scott's fourth wife was implicated and ultimately tried for the crime. The argument was that the marriage (between Scott and his secretary) scandalized the family and created a desire for revenge in her brother. He was, however, acquitted, and the crime has never been solved.

³¹ *Atlanta Daily World*, February 8, 1934, 1, February 11, 1934, 6, February 12, 1934, 6, March 13, 1934, 1; *New York Amsterdam News*, February 14, 1934, 1; Alton Hornsby, Jr., "Georgia," in *The Black Press in the South: 1865-1979*, ed. Henry Lewis Suggs (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 127-130; Allen Woodrow Jones, "Alabama," in *The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979*, ed. Henry Lewis Suggs (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 43; and Roland E. Wolsely. *The Black Press, USA* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1971), 73-74.

local businesses, and then sent that collected material to Atlanta, where SNS staff organized a layout using the material and added syndicated national news from the *World* and other syndicate papers. They then printed the finished product and sent it back to Jackson. The syndicate's contact with the local content was limited to proofreading and the occasional addition of a headline.³²

This created the fundamental importance of the Tademy libel case. Without the relationship with Atlanta, Greene's paper could have survived (and would survive). Greene had Jackson and an outsized reputation in the state. Still, he would not have attained that initial success without a benefactor agency like the SNS, which allowed individuals with few resources to create newspapers. And for the vast majority of southern black newspapers, both within Mississippi and without, would-be journalists and entrepreneurs required those syndication and printing relationships with larger firms to be able to create a viable news network throughout the region. The Tademy case tested the limits of culpability in the relationship between syndicate printers and their member newspapers, and thus the growth limits for black newspapers in the South. While the libel occurred over a distinctly Mississippi incident in a distinctly Mississippi newspaper, Percy Greene's boyhood friends in Atlanta were heavily vested in its outcome.

W. A. Scott's four brothers, his three sisters, his mother, and his two sons all had the responsibility to deny the charge, and while they all did deny it, their denials were by no means uniform.³³ Most family members alleged that the defendants did not "own, publish, manage, control, sell or circulate the newspaper described in the complaint as the Jackson Advocate." Then there were responses from Scott brothers Lewis A. and Daniel M., for example, who claimed that "the defendants have had nothing to do with the operation or control of the newspapers in spite of continued efforts to get possession of their property since the death of the late W. A. Scott, manager and co-founder of the newspapers." Their brother Aurelius, who had been at odds with the family since his brother's murder, had a similar caustic response, not only denying Tademy's charges, but using the opportunity to charge his family members with incompetence and corruption.³⁴ It was clear that the Scott family's fight was not only an effort to define the limits of their culpability in defamation suits resulting from the actions of their member papers, but also an internecine battle between members of the family, whose stake in the business founded by their brother was far from equal.

³² The charges for these services varied, but averaged around \$50 per week. *Tademy v. Scott*, 68 F.Supp. 556 (1945).

³³ To that end, instead of one answer to the suit, the Scotts filed five over the course of October and November 1943. *Chicago Defender*, November 20, 1943, 8; and "Docket 2701."

³⁴ The salacious family charges aside, Aurelius and his brothers essentially argued that they could not have had any responsibility because they did not live in Georgia and were artificially barred from participation in the family business. *Chicago Defender*, November 20, 1943, 8; and Transcript of Record, United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, *Tademy v. Scott*, No. 2701, Civil Action, 12-24. *Atlanta Daily World* records, 1931-1996, No. 1092, Box 25, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.

Under direct examination, C. A. Scott claimed that the syndicate averaged about sixteen newspapers at any one time. "We have certain standard non-controversial non-partisan matter that we give these various papers we print," he said. "They, they supply the local stuff for the editorial page, social page and sports, and we supply four pages of standard material that is non-controversial, non-partisan that is circulated, to these various cities." Scott explained that the syndicate was different than the Associated Negro Press (ANP), which provided content for any paper that paid for the service, but that the syndicate did provide syndicated material written or rewritten in Atlanta for use in member papers.³⁵

The Scotts printed and sent between one and two thousand copies of the paper to Jackson. "We charge them so much for each column of newspaper composition we set up," said Scott, "so much per inch for the advertising, so much for making up the page, and so much per hundred copies for the paper, and we print those papers, in most cases, if they haven't paid us in advance, c.o.d." That generally totaled roughly fifty dollars per week. The syndicate set a paper's local material, then inserted material from the *Atlanta Daily World*, the ANP, or news from other member newspapers. The paper could choose which material it wanted included, or it could allow those choices to be made in Atlanta³⁶.

Most importantly for Scott, however, was the fact that the syndicate did not edit the local material. It did occasionally generate titles for articles that didn't include them, but other than that did not proof the submitted copy. "I did not know about the article," said Scott, referring to Greene's description of Tademy's behavior, "until I got a copy of the suit."³⁷ Scott had never met Tademy, had never received any correspondence from him, and had never been asked to retract anything printed for the *Jackson Advocate*.³⁸

In her own turn on the witness stand, C. A. Scott's mother Emmeline explained that among the additions that the syndicate included in its layout for member papers was national advertising content that profited the Atlanta group, and she admitted that it did benefit the syndicate if member papers had the largest circulation possible, but reminded the Court that neither the Scotts, the *World*, nor the syndicate read

³⁵ "Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: C. A. Scott on Cross-Examination," Transcript of Record, United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, *Tademy v. Scott*, No. 2701, Civil Action, 29-32. *Atlanta Daily World* records, 1931-1996, No. 1092, Box 25, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.29-32

³⁶ Payment for such services would vary according to the work per week, "so much per hundred copies, so much per column inch for local composition, and so much per inch for advertising composition, and of course so much for makeup, if we had to do some special make-up, extra make-up we charged them." "Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: C.A Scott on Cross-Examination," 33-38.

³⁷ "Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: C. A. Scott on Cross-Examination," 39.

³⁸ "Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: C. A. Scott on Direct Examination," Transcript of Record, United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, *Tademy v. Scott*, No. 2701, Civil Action, 47-48. *Atlanta Daily World* records, 1931-1996, No. 1092, Box 25, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.

any of the submitted material for content.³⁹

The office of the *Advocate* was located at 125 ½ North Farish Street, “the outstanding negro street in Jackson,” and it had a circulation between 2,500 and 3,000. Still, it was a small operation, with only two employees. The nature of syndication allowed for such arrangements because Atlanta did the yeoman’s work of production.⁴⁰ The *Advocate* charged roughly forty cents per advertising inch, then charged for the paper itself. Then the syndicate charged the *Advocate* for various services. “The payment is based on \$1.00 a galley in excess of two galleys submitted per issue, or ten cents per inch, make-up for new advertising, and five cents charge, make-up charges for new advertising, with additional charge of \$1.50 for inside make-ups, and \$3.50 for extra front page make-up,” Greene explained in his own testimony. “What we pay them is determined by what we have for them to make up.”

“Naturally we don’t have the same amount of advertising each week. We may have four or five hundred inches one week and the next week we would only have twenty-five.

“Q. They pay according to the amount of advertising? A. And copy. We pay them \$1.25 per galley for copy.

“Q. What do you mean by galley? A. A galley is a certain number of inches of printed matter. A galley measures about 6 ½ inches.”⁴¹

Greene and the Scotts had an agreement for printing confirmed in a simple letter from Atlanta to Jackson. After Tademy issued the suit, however, the two formalized the relationship with a signed document for the purpose of cataloging the various responsibilities of both parties in the relationship.⁴² Scott further explained when re-called for further testimony that articles without a dateline definitely came from Greene. Articles from the ANP or SNS might have been chosen in Atlanta, or might have been clipped from the *Atlanta Daily World* by Greene and sent with his local materials to be included in his *Jackson Advocate* edition.⁴³

For most, however, the minutia of syndication relationships in the southern

³⁹ “Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Emmeline Scott on Cross-Examination,” Transcript of Record, United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, *Tademy v. Scott*, No. 2701, Civil Action, 55-57. *Atlanta Daily World* records, 1931-1996, No. 1092, Box 25, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.

⁴⁰ “Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Percy Greene on Direct Examination,” 96-98; and “Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Edward Tademy on Direct Examination,” 67.

⁴¹ “Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Percy Greene on Direct Examination,” 99-100.

⁴² “Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: C. A. Scott, Recalled Direct Examination,” Transcript of Record, United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, *Tademy v. Scott*, No. 2701, Civil Action, 132-133. *Atlanta Daily World* records, 1931-1996, No. 1092, Box 25, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.

⁴³ “Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: C. A. Scott, Recalled Direct Examination,” 136-140.

black press were the angels dancing on the heads of so many pins. Black Mississippi wanted to know what happened at the school. During the last week of February 1943, the Office of Price Administration (OPA) asked public schools to help issue Ration Book Number 2, and the white Superintendent of Jackson City Schools, Kirby Walker, charged Tademy with heading the effort at Smith Robertson. He had twenty-one of the teachers from his school and thirty-six students from Jackson College to assist with the process.⁴⁴

The group from Jackson College was mostly women, with a few exceptions. Their stint at the school lasted for a week, and it was quickly apparent to many of the students that Smith Robertson's principal was overly familiar, at the very least. Among the women was Irma Anderson, who claimed that she found herself alone in a room when Tademy entered and tried to put his arms around her. He was trying to kiss her, but she refused. He offered her his telephone number, but she refused. "Mr. Tademy," she told him, "I once had respect for you, but I don't have it now." The following day, Tademy again went to Anderson, this time promising her a job at the school after her graduation if she agreed to keep quiet about his advances.⁴⁵

She did not keep quiet, however, telling the leader of the group from Jackson College. That student then reported the incident to the school's dean of students, who then reported it to the college's president. Still, when Tademy filed suit and Anderson originally had to supply a sworn statement to court officials, she denied that the incident took place. "I didn't want to go to Court," she admitted during the trial. "I figured this would be what it was, and I said no; in fact to everything he asked me I said 'no.'"⁴⁶

Tademy, for his part, denied the charges. He had never tried to put his arms around Anderson, he said. He had taught her at nearby Lanier High School prior to his move to Smith Robertson and hers to Jackson College. "If I wanted to do anything mean," he said, "I could have done something mean maybe five or six years ago with them, because they were students over, high school students over at Lanier." Tademy's theory was that the entire project was a cabal by Jackson College members. Greene had attended Jackson College, as had Tademy's original competitor for principal of Smith Robertson. Anderson was obviously still attending. The administrators of the school believed her story. "I understand the Scotts attended Jackson College," too, Tademy told the court.⁴⁷

Tademy was at Smith Robertson the week following the ration book incident

⁴⁴ The OPA issued ration books to ensure that the limited resources of the United States could be distributed equitably during wartime. Ration Book Number 2 contained a series of red and blue stamps, the red for meats and dairy products, the blue for fruits and vegetables. *WWII War Ration Book 2* (Washington DC: USGPO, 1942), #L05.156, Memorial Hall Museum, Deerfield, MA; and "Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Edward Tademy on Direct Examination," 68-69.

⁴⁵ "Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Irma Anderson Norman on Direct Examination," 119-127.

⁴⁶ "Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Irma Anderson Norman on Direct Examination," 119-127.

⁴⁷ "Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Edward Tademy on Direct Examination," 83-90.

when Henry Bell, the school's janitor, showed him a copy of the *Advocate*. Shocked and angry, he went to confront Greene. Greene, however, was uninterested. He "showed him the places where he mentioned different things that I did, accused me of, told him not a word of it was true, and that he should have talked to me before putting anything in a paper like that," said Tademy, "and I asked him to retract, and of course, he was very discourteous and refused to do so, told me to go sue him."⁴⁸

Greene denied being discourteous, but admitted that he refused to retract his articles. "I had verified all of this stuff by conversation with teachers in the school," said Greene, "with the officials of Jackson College and other persons," including several teachers and Dean Henry T. Sampson.⁴⁹ Greene's two daughters attended Lanier High at the time, and he claimed that his only interest in printing the material was because he wanted the best, most reliable people in charge of Jackson's schools.⁵⁰

Greene's motives bore little on the judge's finding of fact in the case. Tademy claimed that more than four hundred people had asked him about the charges. A former colleague, a teacher then residing in Arizona, wrote him to say she had heard about the scandal. "It is," he said, "practically interfering with my work in the community seemingly." People read gossip, discussed gossip, "and perhaps sooner or later it might affect my work in the community if it keeps on." Tademy claimed that while he still held his job at Smith Robertson, "my supervisor said that in case that we fail in this case, that the public would force them to ask my resignation, not that they wanted to do it, on the truthfulness of this, but the public seem to be heated up over it."⁵¹

It was clear that Tademy's reputation had taken a hit. Arguing, however, that "perhaps sooner or later" tangible consequences would come from the publication was not substantive proof of actual damage. And thus Tademy lost his initial suit in federal district court in January 1945, before appealing to the U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals.⁵² In that original decision, Robert L. Russell, federal district court judge for the northern district of Georgia, ruled that Georgia statute argued that anyone seeking punitive damages for libel had to first alert the would-be defendants to give them an opportunity to retract the problematic material. Mississippi had no such statute, but when suing in Georgia, Russell ruled, the plaintiff had to follow the Georgia rules. It was a victory for the Scotts, the *World*, and the syndicate, but it was not a decision that completely abrogated their culpability. Russell was ruling on

⁴⁸ "Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Edward Tademy on Direct Examination," 67-68.

⁴⁹ "Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Percy Greene on Direct Examination," 104.

⁵⁰ "Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Percy Greene on Direct Examination," 108-109.

⁵¹ "Transcript of Evidence, Testimony for Plaintiff: Edward Tademy on Direct Examination," 71-72, 75.

⁵² *Atlanta Daily World*, October 9, 1946, 6.

a finer point of the law, not claiming that Tademy's accusations were unreasonable.⁵³

On appeal to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals the following year, a three-judge panel doubled down on Russell's original ruling, arguing that "the judgment should have been one of dismissal without prejudice because of the plaintiff's failure to comply with the Georgia notice statute governing newspaper libel actions." The Court argued that it was unconcerned with "the evidence or the findings made on the merits" because such was beside the point if the Georgia law was applicable to the case. They found that it was, and thus Tademy lost again. Yet again the Scotts won without a clear definition of their role in the libel.⁵⁴

After being fired from the Jackson school, Tademy set out to prove that the damages he sought were not merely punitive. He was actually suffering. In 1947, he filed another suit including in his complaint a more elaborate explanation of his "great humiliation, embarrassment and mortification as a direct and proximate result of said libels, slanders and the publications thereof," but also some more tangible claims of actual damage. He claimed that he "actually lost his job as superintendent of a school in the City of Jackson for two years, which paid him the sum of approximately \$2400.00 per year, making a total in the sum of \$4800.00." Still, when combined with his continued pain and suffering, Tademy kept his asking price at \$25,000.⁵⁵

He also continued to maintain that he had complied with the Georgia law that required him to notify the defendants and allow them the opportunity to print a retraction. That remained a problematic claim, one that had been quashed in the appellate court, and so the Scotts' response emphasized the error. U. S. District Judge Robert L. Russell agreed. The claim was invalid. But the rest of the family's attempts to have the case dismissed failed. There would be another trial.⁵⁶

⁵³ The law in question was *Georgia Code*, Section 105-712. Russell's opinion rested on the fact that the damages sought by Tademy were merely punitive, which put the claim under the Georgia statute. "A different question might be presented if the plaintiff had proved any actual damage resulting from the libel," wrote Russell. "But as stated, no such damages are shown in this case." Tademy had not lost his job over the scandal. He had remained president of the Eighth Educational District of the Mississippi Association of Teachers in Colored Schools. He was still an officer in the Christmas Cheer Club. That comparative success put his claim under the aegis of the Georgia law requiring notification to potential defendants, giving proper opportunity for retraction. *Tademy v. Scott*, 68 F.Supp. 556 (1945).

⁵⁴ The judges were Samuel H. Sibley, Joseph C. Hutcheson, and Leon McCord. McCord wrote the opinion for a unanimous court. *Tademy v. Scott*, 157 F.2d 826 (1946).

⁵⁵ "Complaint," Civil Action No. 3161, *Tademy v. Scott*, RG 21, U. S. District Court, Northern District Court of Georgia, Atlanta Division, Cases Other Than Bankruptcy (General Index Cases) 1912-1959, Case Nos.: 29176-29189, Box No. 1275, accession number 29189, National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta, GA.

⁵⁶ "Answer of Defendant Esther Scott," Civil Action No. 3161, *Tademy v. Scott*, RG 21, U. S. District Court, Northern District Court of Georgia, Atlanta Division, Cases Other Than Bankruptcy (General Index Cases) 1912-1959, Case Nos.: 29176-29189, Box No. 1275, accession number 29189, National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta, GA. For decision and failed attempts at dismissal, see successive pages in Civil Action No. 3161, *Tademy v. Scott*, RG 21, US District Court, Northern District Court of Georgia, Atlanta Division, Cases Other Than Bankruptcy (General Index Cases) 1912-1959, Case Nos.: 29176-29189, Box No. 1275, accession number 29189, National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta, GA.

The most pressing issue of the second inquest was Tademy's sight. He had almost no vision in his left eye and only marginal vision in his right. He had a cornea replacement and could only see out of his right eye with a contact lens, an incredibly rare device in the 1940s. Though there was plenty of confusion about just what a contact lens was, Tademy's essential argument was that he had used one the year prior to his firing, so the troubles with his eyesight could not have been the reason for his unemployment.⁵⁷

Kirby Walker, the superintendent of Jackson Public Schools, however, claimed that Tademy's dismissal was directly and only related to his eyesight. O. B. Cobbins, Jackson's director of Colored Schools, validated Walker's testimony. Tademy's vision problems, he claimed, were the sole reason for his dismissal. Still, Cobbins, unlike Walker, admitted to being aware of the sexual harassment controversy, and that it was a well-trod topic among teachers in the city.⁵⁸

The new testimony helped demonstrate to Judge Russell that, if nothing else, "the publication of the two articles in question likewise, in some measure at least, contributed to his failure to secure employment as a teacher for at least one year, 1945-46. Furthermore," he noted, "the libelous articles will affect him to some extent in the future." Tademy's eyesight, however, was surely another determining factor in his failure to find employment, and the suffering described by the plaintiff had really been dismissed in the first trial. Russell awarded Tademy \$1,000, which the *Atlanta Daily World* quickly paid.⁵⁹ The case had come to an end.

It was not without its consequences. The boyhood friends who had cemented their adult relationship through a syndication agreement for Greene's paper severed that bond in July 1946, when Tademy's original appeal was before the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. The relationship had been strained by the case, as the Scotts essentially took the blame for Greene's assertions. They also paid the bill, because the

⁵⁷ In 1948, in the months before the trial, Tademy had another corneal procedure, this one a transplant, on the same left eye. "Deposition of Edward Tademy, Plaintiff, February 28, 1948," Civil Action No. 3161, *Tademy v. Scott*, 8-15, 22, RG 21, U. S. District Court, Northern District Court of Georgia, Atlanta Division, Cases Other Than Bankruptcy (General Index Cases) 1912-1959, Case Nos.: 29176-29189, Box No. 1275, accession number 29189, National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta, GA.

⁵⁸ "Depositions of Kirby Walker and O. B. Cobbins, February 12, 1948," Civil Action No. 3161, *Tademy v. Scott*, RG 21, U. S. District Court, Northern District Court of Georgia, Atlanta Division, Cases Other Than Bankruptcy (General Index Cases) 1912-1959, Case Nos.: 29176-29189, Box No. 1275, accession number 29189, National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta, GA.

⁵⁹ "Findings of Fact," Civil Action No. 3161, *Tademy v. Scott*, RG 21, U. S. District Court, Northern District Court of Georgia, Atlanta Division, Cases Other Than Bankruptcy (General Index Cases) 1912-1959, Case Nos.: 29176-29189, Box No. 1275, accession number 29189, National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta, GA; "Judgment," Civil Action No. 3161, *Tademy v. Scott*, RG 21, U. S. District Court, Northern District Court of Georgia, Atlanta Division, Cases Other Than Bankruptcy (General Index Cases) 1912-1959, Case Nos.: 29176-29189, Box No. 1275, accession number 29189, National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta, GA; and "Statement of Court Costs," Civil Action No. 3161, *Tademy v. Scott*, RG 21, U. S. District Court, Northern District Court of Georgia, Atlanta Division, Cases Other Than Bankruptcy (General Index Cases) 1912-1959, Case Nos.: 29176-29189, Box No. 1275, accession number 29189, National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta, GA.

court costs for two federal civil trials surely outstripped the small fees that Greene paid into the *World* for syndication. Black southern printing and syndication services, however, were few and far between, so Greene signed a printing agreement with Patton Publishing, a white Jackson firm.⁶⁰

He was able to make such a deal because of the Washingtonian credentials he had established throughout the decade. Arguing for political rights while willingly sloughing off social rights had paid off, just as it had for Booker T. Washington, who had been able to parlay his own voting rights activism and social accommodationism into white philanthropy for black education throughout the South. Whether solidifying his paper's relationship with local whites strengthened Greene's position in Jackson or the end of the Depression increased the purchasing power of subscribers and advertisers, the *Jackson Advocate's* circulation grew through the rest of the decade. Meanwhile, the syndicate also experienced continuing success. The SNS had thirteen member newspapers at the time of the *Advocate's* move to Patton Publishing. It kept between nine and thirteen throughout the rest of the decade.⁶¹

Syndication among the black presses operating in the first half of the twentieth century is often misunderstood. The *Chicago Defender*, for example, created several member papers to expand its reach. So, too, did the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the Baltimore *Afro-American*. At the same time, there were news services like the Associated Negro Press that provided national news copy to black newspapers.⁶² But the Scott Newspaper Syndicate combined printing services and news copy to create a vehicle for small operations throughout the South and the Midwest to provide an outlet for African Americans to get news that concerned them. For small publishers in Mississippi, that relationship could be absolutely vital, but as the Tademey case demonstrated, the relationship between the syndication service and its members could also be problematic. The existence of the syndicate helped formalize knowledge among the black population, particularly in the South, providing information that readers could get from no other source. At the same time, however, its influence stopped at the water's edge of the opinion page. In most cases, those opinions aligned. Both Greene and the Scotts remained Washingtonian conservatives, and both the *Atlanta Daily World* and *Jackson Advocate* were known for their moderate positions on civil rights activism as the 1940s gave way to the 1950s and 60s. Still, there was no fundamental requirement that those positions align. And in the era before World War II and the civil rights movement, when the SNS was responsible for that many newspapers, beyond its own *Atlanta Daily*

⁶⁰ "Cash receipts," OBV 19, *Atlanta Daily World* records, 1931-1996, Manuscript Collection No. 1092, Emory University Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, GA; and Thompson, *Percy Greene and the Jackson Advocate*, 26-27.

⁶¹ "Cash receipts," OBV 20 through OBV 45, *Atlanta Daily World* records, 1931-1996, Manuscript Collection No. 1092, Emory University Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, GA; and Thompson, *Percy Greene and the Jackson Advocate*, 26-27.

⁶² See Lawrence D. Hogan, *A Black National News Service: The Associated Negro Press and Claude Barnett* (Hackensack, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984).

World, fact-checking evidence about locals behaving badly in a Jackson, Mississippi, high school was practically impossible.

There was obviously a significant difference between meaningful rights activism and local gossip about a community leader becoming “violently amorous,” but that did not diminish the importance of the latter. The Tademy case enthralled black Jackson and frustrated the Scotts in Atlanta, but, more substantively, it allowed the courts to draw the lines of culpability for syndicates that published the work of others, and even though the SNS eventually lost the judgment, it was a small judgment, decided on technicalities and years in the making. It thereby provided a form of insulation for the *Atlanta Daily World* and its syndicate to do the work of creating a viable black southern news network. Formalizing news coverage across a region dominated by Jim Crow was fundamentally important to the development of a unity of thought among black southerners in the generation before the civil rights movement. That unity could have developed regardless of the outcome of Edward Tademy’s libel suit, but the consequences of his case provided for the first time a horizon line for the syndicate’s culpability in printing the black South’s news.

