

African American Journalists: Autobiography as Memoir and Manifesto

Calvin L. Hall

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In the last decade of the 20th century, during a time when African Americans were starting to take inventory of the gains of the civil rights movement and its effects on the lives of black professionals in the public sphere, the memoirs of several journalists were published, a number of which became national bestsellers. *African American Journalists* examines select autobiographies written by African American journalists in order to explore the relationship between race, class, gender, and journalism practice.

At the heart of this study is the contention that contemporary memoirs written by African American journalists are quasi-political documents?manifestos written in reaction to and against the forces of institutionalized racism in the newsroom. The memoirs featured in this study include Jill Nelson's *Volunteer Slavery: My Authentic Negro Experience*, Nathan McCall's *Makes Me Wanna Holler: A Young Black Man in America*, Jake Lamar's *Bourgeois Blues: An American Memoir*, and Patricia Raybon's *My First White Friend: Confessions on Race, Love, and Forgiveness*. The exploration of these works increases our understanding of the problems that members of other underrepresented groups may face in the workplace.



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