important role of *Freedom's Journal* in establishing an important precedent as an alternative to the mainstream press in a 1977 article that closed with the following passage:

*Freedom's Journal* gave Blacks a voice of their own and an opportunity not only to answer the attacks printed in the White press but to read articles on Black accomplishments, marriages, deaths that the White press of the day ignored. Slavery is no longer here, but its vestiges are and today's reporters and publishers—Black and White—could do well to study the *Journal*, adopt its objectives and emulate its content. Blacks still need to "plead our own causes," and will need to do so for sometime to come.\(^\text{12}\)

Like many of the Black and other newspapers for non-White readers that were to follow it, *Freedom's Journal* filled an important void. It did more than take issue with the coverage and editorial positions that were found in the White press and present an alternative to them. It also reported events of interest to Blacks with dignity and pride, demonstrating that its Black readers, though victims of racism, had a broader range of activities and interests than what was presented in the mainstream press of the era. Over the years the Black press has continued to fulfill this dual role to its readers. On one side, they have raised the concerns and protests of Blacks when confronted with slavery, segregation, and discrimination. On the other, they have reported on the organizational, social, religious, and other activities and interests within the Black communities that have too often been ignored by the White media.

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The First Native American Newspaper:  
_Cherokee Phoenix_ (1828)

Like the first Latino and Black newspapers, the first Native American newspaper was born of a crisis, in this case the federal government's efforts to displace the Cherokee Nation from the millions of acres of land it held in North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee. It was because of this crisis that the first Native American newspaper, the _Cherokee Phoenix_, was born to unify and express the opinion of the Cherokee people.\(^\text{13}\)
The *Cherokee Phoenix* was established by the Cherokee Nation near the current site of Calhoun, Georgia, and printed its first edition on February 21, 1828. It appeared weekly, with a few gaps, for 6 years until 1834, when it folded. Like *El Missisipi*, it was printed in a bilingual format, making use of both English and the 86-character Cherokee alphabet that had been introduced by Sequoyah (also known as George Gist) after 12 years of work in 1821. James and Sharon Murphy write that the newspaper was started out of two needs. One was the desire of missionaries to use print media to spread Christianity among the Cherokees. The other was the desire of the leaders of the Cherokee Nation to unify Cherokees and others in support of the fight to keep their homelands.

The first editor was Cherokee school teacher Elias Boudinot, who also was clerk of the Cherokee National Council. To raise funds for the new newspaper he traveled along the East Coast speaking to philanthropic and religious groups. Financial support for the newspaper came both from Cherokee tribal leaders, who allocated $1,500 to help purchase a press and type before Boudinot began his fund-raising trip, and from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in New England, which helped support the casting of Sequoyah’s alphabet into metal type. The missionary funds were requested by Samuel Worcester, a missionary among the Cherokees, who encouraged Boudinot’s effort to start the first Native American newspaper. The Cherokees later repaid the missions board for its help.

Boudinot’s vision, like that of the editors of *Freedom’s Journal*, was of a newspaper that would accurately reflect the lives of his people and help mobilize public opinion in support of their struggle. In an 1826 speech titled “Address to Whites” at the First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia he outlined the goals of the new newspaper as comprising a summary of religious and political events, etc., on the one hand; and on the other, exhibiting the feelings, dispositions, improvements, and prospects of the Indians: their traditions, their true character, as it once was, as it now is, and the ways and means most likely to throw the mantle of civilization over all tribes; and such other matters as will tend to diffuse proper and correct impressions in regard to their condition—such a paper could not fail to create much interest in the American Community, favorable to the aborigines, and to have a powerful influence on the advancement of the Indians themselves.}

In its first issue the newspaper reprinted its prospectus prepared by Worcester that promised that, in addition to local news, the *Cherokee Phoenix* would report Cherokee laws and customs, cover their progress in education, religion, and culture, print news about other tribes, and “interesting articles calculated to promote Literature, Civilization, and Religion among the Cherokees.” Subscriptions came from as far away as Germany and the newspaper was circulated widely among the Cherokees, although sometimes only one copy was allocated for each village. In the fourth issue the newspaper carried the first written laws of the Cherokees, with Boudinot’s comments that he hoped “Our readers will perhaps be gratified to see the first commencement of written laws among the Cherokees.” Although the newspaper printed articles in both languages, it was only on rare occasions that the same article was published in both languages. There were generally three columns in English for every two in Cherokee, because the structure of Sequoyah’s alphabet devised characters for whole syllables and it took less space to write in Cherokee than in English.

Boudinot has been credited with building the *Cherokee Phoenix* “into a strong and loud voice of the Cherokee people as they struggled against increasingly insurmountable government opposition.” His voice was not always strident. In the first issue he promised the paper “will not return railing for railing, but consult mildness.” But he made it clear that the newspaper would advocate the Cherokee position in those issues that brought them into conflict with the encroaching Whites and their governments. In the first issue he wrote:

In regard the controversy with Georgia, and the present policy of the Central Government, in removing, and concentrating the Indians, out of the limits of any state, which, by the way, appears to be gaining strength, we will invariably and faithfully state the feelings of the majority of our people. Our views, as a people, on this subject, have been most sadly misrepresented. These views we do not wish to conceal, but are willing that the public should know what we think of this policy, which, in our opinion, if carried into effect, will prove pernicious to us.”

At the end of the column he explained how he chose the name *Phoenix* for the newspaper and looked forward to a time when all
tribes would rise up and put an end to both the physical oppression and negative language to which they had been subjected. He wrote:

We would now commit our feeble efforts to the good will and indulgence of the public, praying that God will attend them with his blessings, and hoping for that happy period, when all the Indian tribes of America shall rise, Phoenix like, from their ashes, and when the terms "Indian depredation," "war whoop," "scalping knife" and the like, shall become obsolete, and for ever be "buried deep underground." 19

As Murphy and Murphy point out, in subsequent issues Boudinot used the press to protest attempts by the state of Georgia to include the Cherokee Nation within its criminal laws and fought against federal appropriations to remove the Cherokees from their mineral-laden lands. But, like Freedom's Journal, it is unfair to describe the Cherokee Phoenix as a newspaper that was concerned solely with the struggles confronting the Cherokees. The newspaper also carried advertising for merchants, a boarding school, and other businesses catering to the needs of its readers. The newspaper also campaigned against alcoholism among the Cherokees and the slavery in which Blacks were held, although Cherokee law permitted the owning of slaves and had other provisions discriminating against Black slaves. The newspaper also ran advertisements by owners of runaway slaves and occasionally ran anecdotes in Black dialect. 20

A year after it was founded the newspaper enlarged its title to become the Cherokee Phoenix and Indian Advocate, indicating its activist role in the Native American struggles. Over the years the editor and staff continued to protest encroachment of Cherokee legal and civil rights by Whites, including the harassment, arrests, and threats directed toward the newspaper's staff by Georgia officials. As the Cherokees came under intense pressure to move from their ancestral lands, the leaders of the nation itself became divided on the issue. Boudinot resigned the editorship in 1832, after he had been ordered by Cherokee Principal Chief John Ross not to publish reports of the division among the leaders. The new editor was Ross's brother-in-law, John Hicks, who continued to fight against the land grabbing and harassment confronting the Cherokees. But the newspaper appeared less regularly and finally ceased publication on May 31, 1834.

The Cherokee Phoenix, like the other Native American newspapers that were to follow it, found the bilingual format to be an effective way of communicating with both its Native American and immigrant audience. Although the bilingual format is diminishing among Native American newspapers today, it remained a characteristic of Native American publications for a number of years. Like the Cherokee Phoenix, many of the newspapers that followed devoted the majority of their space to news of specific interest to Native Americans, with less attention to national and international events without a specific impact on the Native American population. And, like the Cherokee Phoenix, those Native American newspapers that appear to have had the greatest success have been the tribal newspapers that have an affiliation and receive a portion of their financial support from a specific tribe.

The First Asian American Newspaper: The Golden Hills' News (1851?)

Although journalism historians point with certainty to Freedom's Journal as the first Black newspaper, Cherokee Phoenix as the first Native American newspaper and (with near certainty) to El Misisipi as the first Latino newspaper, it is with less confidence that the Golden Hills' News is identified as the first Asian American newspaper. There is little doubt that travelers and settlers from Asia were in the territories that now comprise the United States for a long time before what appears to be the first newspaper appeared. There are documented, though disputed, reports of Hui Shên, a Chinese Buddhist priest, sailing down the coast of what is now California following his arrival in what is now British Columbia, Canada, in 458 A.D., about a thousand years before Christopher Columbus first landed in the Americas. Spanish explorers in California reported finding the wreck of a ship that is believed to be of Asian construction on the California coast in 1774. 21 People from Asia have been reported steadily, but infrequently, in the United States since at least 1785, when several Chinese sailors became stranded in Baltimore.