

ANNIE MALONE AND PORO COLLEGE:  
BUILDING AN EMPIRE OF BEAUTY IN ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI FROM 1915 TO 1930

Chajuana V. Trawick

Dr. Laurel E. Wilson, Dissertation Supervisor

Dr. Robert E. Weems Jr. Dissertation Co-Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Understanding the ideals of African American beauty culture promoted by entrepreneurs and businesses in the St. Louis *Argus* newspaper from 1915 to 1930 fills a void in American history. Presenting keywords in advertisement headlines communicates a company's specific message regarding their ideals of beauty culture to readers. The purpose of this research study was to examine advertisements promoting African American beauty culture in the St. Louis *Argus* from 1915 to 1930 to determine what was being promoted as "Ideals of Beauty Culture" to the African American community in St. Louis, Missouri. Annie Malone's Poro College, Dr. Fred Palmer's Skin Whitener, Madam C.J. Walker's Wonderful Hair Grower, and Herolin's Hair Pomade proved to be the most successful businesses from a total of 142 companies based on longevity and consistent records of advertisements and promotions. Over the sixteen year period six themes emerged from their advertisement headlines; Agents Wanted, Business Growth and Identity, Hair Care, Hair Straightening, Skin Care and Skin Whitening products and services. Results show that Annie Malone had the most consistent record of St. Louis *Argus* advertisements promoting ideals of African American hair and skin care and business growth as seen in the St. Louis *Argus* from 1915 to 1930.