

Public Abstract

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Title:William Apess, Elias Boudinot, and Samuel Cornish: Native Americans and African-Americans Looking for Freedom of Expression, Representation, and Rhetorical Sovereignty During the Age of Jackson

Ethnic minority groups in the United States tend to be misrepresented in journalism. During the age of Jackson, freedom of expression benefited Native Americans and African-Americans in the United States, as it helped them to battle against misrepresentation and controls of information and to develop a form of rhetorical sovereignty, despite pressures that put some limits upon that freedom of expression and form of sovereignty. Pequot writer William Apess, Cherokee editor Elias Boudinot, and African-American editor Samuel Cornish sought and practiced the right to represent themselves and their ethnic groups. This contributed to the political and cultural survival of their ethnic groups. Scott Lyons says, "Rhetorical sovereignty is the inherent right and ability of peoples to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse." This dissertation puts rhetorical sovereignty into a historical context, finding that the concept may promote freedom of expression and the right of rhetorical representation for "peoples" but not for individual people. Sometimes the goals of individuals contradict the goals of the groups to which the individuals belong. This can be negotiated for the benefit of all. Thus, new theoretical directions need to be developed so that group and individual rights for freedom of expression can be guaranteed at the same time. This will help ethnic minority groups to combat controls of information and misrepresentation.