



PRESS RELEASE

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Valdosta State's Aiello wins 2019 Book Award

The American Journalism Historians Association has announced Dr. Thomas Aiello of Valdosta State as the winner of the 2019 Book Award. Aiello's honor comes after his work on the 2018 release "The Grapevine of the Black South: The Scott Newspaper Syndicate in the Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement."

"This project simply wouldn't exist without the corpus of literature produced by members of the AJHA, and to win this award and be part of the legacy of such an amazing organization is truly an honor," Aiello said.

"The Grapevine of the Black South" is Aiello's study of the preeminent black press of the Southern states.

"Most of the literature on the black press emphasizes northern and western newspapers, largely because they were saved and thus reviewable," Aiello said. "But the vast majority of the black population in the first half of the twentieth century was in the South. The problem with understanding those papers, particularly in any systematic way, is access.

"The Scott Newspaper Syndicate was the core of most newspaper activity in the South, so through an understanding of its activity, we can better understand an often forgotten and often misunderstood part of the information network that helped create the ideology of the southern civil rights movement that everyone venerates."

Aiello's goals for the book, however, go beyond just understanding a key Southern press.

"I hope the book gives readers a real understanding not only of the Scott Syndicate and the black press in the South, but also of how important networks of information are to meaning-making and ideology in any given community," Aiello said. "I think as historians we often get tangled in the assumption that newspapers are primarily a source of information for historical subjects rather than absolutely vital historical subjects themselves. Information networks create power and culture in a variety of ways, and understanding those networks in the South gives us a new understanding of the civil rights mindset and its trajectory on the ground."

Aiello will be formally recognized as part of a Book Award panel presentation at the 38th Annual AJHA National Convention, which will take place Oct. 3-5 in Dallas.

Joining Aiello will be three other scholars whose books received honorable mention: Dr. Matthew Pressman of Seton Hall, author of "On Press: The Liberal Values That Shaped the News"; Dr. Ronald D. Rodgers of the University of Florida, author of "The Struggle for the Soul of Journalism: The Pulpit versus the Press, 1833-1923"; and Dr. Michael Stamm of Michigan State, author of "Dead Tree Media: Manufacturing the Newspaper in Twentieth-Century North America."

Founded in 1981, the American Journalism Historians Association seeks to advance education and research in mass communication history. Members work to raise historical standards and ensure that all scholars and students recognize the vast importance of media history and apply this knowledge to the advancement of society. For more information on AJHA, visit <http://www.ajhaonline.org>.

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