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A comprehensive study of the history of Black owned/operated radio stations and factors that influence their beginning and/or survival

Anthony Stevens
University of Northern Iowa

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A comprehensive study of the history of Black owned/operated radio stations and factors that influence their beginning and/or survival

Abstract

This paper will provide a comprehensive view of Black owned and operated radio by examining the historical developments, along with some economical factors that have had an impact on Black radio. In addition, the writer will focus on the progress of Black radio, as well as the financial aspects involved in the survival and purchasing of the Black radio station. Finally, this writer will discuss the strategies used by Black radio in programming and management techniques.

A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF BLACK
OWNED/OPERATED RADIO STATIONS AND FACTORS
THAT INFLUENCE THEIR BEGINNING AND/OR SURVIVAL

A Research Paper

Submitted to

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Communications Media

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Anthony Stevens

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of Master of Arts in Communications Media

Roger A. Kueter

July 23, 1981
Date Approved

[Signature]
Director of Research Paper

Robert R. Hardman

July 24, 1981
Date Approved

[Signature]
Graduate Faculty Advisor

Robert R. Hardman

July 24, 1981
Date Approved

[Signature]
Graduate Faculty Reader

Ernest K. Dishner

7/24/81
Date Approved

[Signature]
Head, Department of
Curriculum and Instruction

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PREFACE

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Few people will deny the influence of the media. It is a central nerve of our nation. It influences how we relate to one another and the way we look at the world. In a speech delivered by the Honorable Julian Bond, he stated that, "the media even determines the way we educate ourselves, what we eat and even who we elect to political office."¹

The media has historically distorted the condition of Blacks in America. Malcolm X once stated, "I don't care what point I made in interviews, it practically never got printed the way I said...if I said Mary had a little lamb what probably would have appeared was Malcolm X Lampoons Mary."² A white author wrote that the "Amos and Andy" show, more than any other radio program, influenced the way he thought about Black people."³

Recently there has been a move to investigate and criticize the omnipresence of the media, especially the broadcasting industry. Black radio has not escaped the issue. Black radio is considered by some people to be a strong viable institution in the Black community. Clearly, however, Black radio is a buisness and a great deal more. Owning a broadcast facility provides the opportunity to influence and affect change in society.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the economic factors surrounding the performance of Black radio. I will also establish a working definition of Black radio, examine its growth, and observe some of the financial problems involved in purchasing a radio station. Finally I will review issues in programming and management along with the problems of rating services and advertising agencies that are presented to Black broadcasters.

Materials consulted for this paper include scholarly studies, newspapers, periodicals, books, taped hearings and speeches. Reports, convention/conference materials, and data from the National Association of Broadcasters and the Federal Communications Commission will also be used.

Attempts at Defining Black Radio

Since the inception of Black radio there have been far too many definitions. As a result the analysis of this medium has been short changed and lacking in its substance. This has resulted in a constant and groundless criticism of both Blacks in radio and Black owners of radio stations today. It denies the Black radio's total experience, discounts the integrity of those Blacks who were involved with this medium long ago. It also fails to address the magnitude of problems facing Blacks involved with radio.

Black radio is generally characterized in three kinds of ways:

1) those statements lacking historical foundation, 2) extremely negative statements, and 3) romantic statements. For example, only a few years ago Black communications students thought the original "Amos n' Andy" show was Black radio.⁴ Some people thought, and still think, Black announcers are Black radio.⁵ Some people have referred to "Black radio" as "Negro Radio."⁶ Another writer stated that even though the radio programs have been going out over the airways for half a century, Black people today find themselves just as unable to relate to the electronic media as they were fifty years ago.⁷

Derrick Humphries, Senior Broadcast Lawyer at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), has insisted on being specific when we discuss what we refer to as Black radio, that we stop using convenient phrases to describe a delicate and complicated financial affair. He argues that Black radio be viewed as a case of Black business people who are owners of stations, or Black professionals who are news people, or even, Black people who are professional broadcasters.⁸

Paul Yates, Chief Operations Officer for Mutual Black Network, agrees with Humphrey. He even goes further to say that there's no such thing as Black radio today, that it is "nothing but a variation of 'Top 40' general radio."⁹ Even though Yates received criticism for that statement, he went on to say that his statement was an attempt to end a radio type that aimed at the lowest common denominator of Black experience and legitimized the larger society's already stereotypes of Black Americans.

Despite all of the negative opinions of Black radio there is a positive side. Many researchers have gone on record to state that Black American's most important source of information is Black radio.¹⁰ The first manager of Howard University's WHUR-FM station, defines Black radio as a "manufacturing plant" that manufactures and markets programs back to the community from whence it extracts raw materials.¹¹

Any definition of Black radio has to have included the socio-political, legal and economic factors that are infringed upon the development of Black radio. The Black radio stations have been ineffectual in transforming the conditions of the communities in which they exist, because of the Black communities' inability to gain control from the previous owners.

John Woodford, former editor of Bilalian News states that until Blacks are able to achieve both political and significant financial control over their community facilities, the Black community will always be threatened with cancellation, censorship and distortion about what is happening to them.¹² Assuming Woodford is correct, we could define Black radio as stations that are black-owned, staffed and operated, directed at developing the Black community, while attempting to make the Black community financially viable.¹³ Given this definition one might say that America is experiencing the birth of Black radio.

What is called Black radio, has gone through at least three stages of development. The first occurred when White radio station owners permitted a Black personality to buy short time blocks to program to Black audiences. The second stage, Black-oriented radio, developed when White owners began to devote larger segments of their air time to the Black community. The most recent stage has occurred with the emergence of Black owned and operated stations. The following chapter will describe these developments in more detail.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History of Black Radio

A. The Black Personality of Radio

Black involvement in radio began in 1922 when N. T. Grantland first presented Blacks over radio station WHN in New York.¹⁴ They included Flouroy Miller, Juan Hernandez, Fran Silvera, Noble Sissle and his orchestra, comedians Aubry Miles and Bert Williams. Others included were Duke Ellington's orchestra which broadcast from the Cotton Club in New York City, a musical quartet called the Southerners, band leader Earl Hines and musician Buddy Miles.¹⁵ Among the first Black artists to perform dramatic roles in a soap opera on radio was Bell McGuirity and Gee James.¹⁶ They played in the 1928 NBC presentation of "Townsend Murder Mystery." In 1931 the Lafayette Players stage actors, which was organized by Carlton Moss began presenting radio sketches about various aspects of Black life for half an hour once a week.¹⁷

Whitman played a long string of radio programs from 1930 to 1948, including "Amos n' Andy" and "Beulah." Eddie Anderson, was probably the first Black with the longest and most consistent record of employment in radio, he played "Rochester" in the Jack Benny program, which began in 1937, even though his was not among one of the originals.¹⁸ Jackie Robinson also had a show which addressed the topics of sports and juvenile delinquency among Blacks called "It's a Steal."¹⁹

Conflicting reports make it difficult to determine who was the first Black woman in radio. Ruby Dandridge, by her own declaration, was in radio since its infancy. Lillian Randolph began her radio activities in 1930. Reports also show that Hattie McDaniel was the first Black actress

to star on radio in 1947, but was aired under an assumed name.²⁰

In 1924 local and network broadcasters began to allocate anywhere from one to three hours to Black disc jockeys. This established Black disc jockeys as the key link in the relationship between Black people and the radio medium.

Jack Cooper was one of the first Black disc jockeys to be heard on the air. He began performing on station WCAP in Washington, D.C. as a vaudeville artist and ventriloquist. He also did a four-character skit on a musical variety show. Cooper used to say that he was "the first four Negroes in radio."²¹ He was employed at station WMSC (Chicago) from 1928-29, as the only black disc jockey in radio. He worked on a brokerage basis and paid WMSC for time blocks. By 1930, Cooper had produced a one hour show over the station entitled the "All Negro Hour."²² The show featured Black bands and other entertainment.

Another disc jockey, Al Benson began brokering a thirty minute show in 1944, which grew to nine and one half hours daily on three radio stations in the area. Benson also sold air time to Black churches and became Chicago's most popular disc jockey by 1948.²³

By the end of the war, there were only a few Black disc jockeys in the country. There was Jack Gibson in Chicago, Ed Baker and Jan Douglas in Detroit, Bass Harris in Hammond, Indiana, Norfey Whitted in Durham, along with Cooper and Benson.²⁴ These men wrote their own script, sold it, and even announced it. Being very keen businessmen, some of them made \$100,000 annually.²⁵

In the early 1950's the development of the television caused radio to experience what was referred to as the "radio panic." Television began to draw off a major portion of the advertising dollars, which was a

prime source of revenue for broadcasters. The switch to television for entertainment and information forced radio to change radically. The change took the form of all rock, all talk, all classical, etc. radio programs. The all Black radio station also became a logical extension of this trend.²⁶ During this trend Black radio evolved into its second stage of development, the Black oriented radio station.

B. Black Oriented Radio

The first station credited with devoting all of its air time to Black oriented radio was station WDIA in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1947. The announcement of the format triggered many angry telephone calls, but the station became an overnight success financially.²⁷ During the same year station WOOK in Washington, D.C. adopted an all-Black format with Harold (Hal) Jackson (now with NLIB in New York), who is believed to be the radio industry's first full-time black announcer.²⁸ WOOK also had financial success.

The move towards all-Black stations caused a drastic decline of live performances of Black musicians, actors, actresses, and other Black artists in radio. Stations were now beginning to play their recordings.²⁹

During the late 1940's and early 1950's there was a flourish of Black disc jockeys over White stations and of Black-oriented radio stations. The famous blues singer, B.B. King and Rufus Thomas, who is said to be the "World's Oldest Teenager," were two of the first disc jockeys at WDIA.³⁰

Other popular disc jockeys during this period include the following:

1. Joe Adams, KOWL, Santa Monica, California
2. Cesta Ayers, (Dr. Daddy-O) KHT, Houston, Texas
3. Al Benson, WJJD, WGES, Chicago, Illinois
4. Ernie (The Whip) Bringier, WMRY, New Orleans, Louisiana
5. Jimmy Brownlow, KCNA, Tuscon, Arizona
6. Ramon Bruce, WHAT, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
7. Willie Bryant, WHOM, New York, New York

8. Vernon Chambers, KCOH, Houston, Texas
9. Bill Cook, WAAT, Newark, New Jersey
10. Jack L. Cooper, WEDC, WHFC, Chicago, Illinois
11. Ralph Cooper, WOV, New York, New York
12. Sugar Daddy, WBCO, Bessemer, Alabama
13. Mary Dee, WHOD, Homestead, Pennsylvania
14. Phil Gordon, WOV, New York, New York
15. Jack Holmes, WLOW, Norfolk, Virginia
16. Mary Holt, WSRS, Cleveland, Ohio
17. Jon Massey, WWDC, Washington, D.C.
18. Bruce (Sugar Throat) Miller, WAAA, Winston-Salem
North Carolina
19. George Prader, KGBC, Galveston, Texas
20. Nat D. Williams, WDIA, Memphis, Tennessee³¹

The biggest percentage of the disc jockeys in the Black-oriented stations were Whites imitating Blacks. Blacks were only a small percentage of the work force. "Jumpin George Oxford" was a white-disc jockey at a San Francisco station. He was very popular because he could mimick the so-called Black dialect, which was known at that time as the "chitlin curcuit," or "grit circuit." Many people would swear that "Jumpin George" was Black.

According to the National Association of Broadcasters the percentage of Blacks currently employed in broadcasting is still quite small. Even though they were not able to give a break down of the percentage of Blacks in broadcasting, they were able to give figures of minorities employed in broadcasting. According to the figures, there were 14.3%

or 20,259 minorities employed full-time with the broadcast industry in 1979 (see Tables 1 & 2).³² The figures also indicated that minorities were employed in the lower level jobs.

A good example of how well white personalities fooled an entire country of Black people is KLAC in Nashville. This station was known to Blacks all over the country as "Randy's Record Market." Everyone thought that it was a Black station because their announcers imitated Black people's voice patterns. During the early 1960's you could tune into the program from Waterloo, Iowa.

In 1967, station WDES in Chicago was purchased by a white corporation from Dallas. The corporation adopted an all-Black format. In a year's time the station was second in the ratings to number one, WLS.³³ This enabled White owners of Black-oriented radio stations to penetrate the Black community and capatilize on it.

By the late 1960's over 500 stations were devoting from twenty-five to one hundred percent of their air time to Black-oriented music. The programs consisted of sixty to seventy percent rhythm and blues, ten to twenty percent religious music.

C. Black Owned and Operated Stations

It is not exactly known when Black radio moved into its third stage of development, but it is certain that they were owners in the 1950's. Station WSOK in Nashville was reported to have had several Black shareholders.³⁴

In 1951 station WERD in Atlanta was entirely owned by Blacks. It was bought for \$50,000 by a Black certified public accountant and his son.³⁵ Stations were also purchased in Detroit, St. Louis, and Huntsville, Alabama in the mid 1950's.³⁶

The complexion of ownership in radio began to change when entertainer James Brown purchased WJBE (Knoxville) in 1968, making it the first major Black station to be approved by the FCC.³⁷ Brown later purchased stations in Augusta, Georgia, and in Baltimore, Maryland.

In August, 1972, four radio stations were sold to a Black group in Pennsylvania. Another group, headed by Jerrell Jones, the Black publisher of the Milwaukee Courier, bought station WNOV (AM) in Milwaukee.³⁸ The year 1972 brought the biggest increase in the number of Black owned radio stations. John Johnson, Black editor-publisher of Ebony, Jet, Black World, and Black Stars, purchased Chicago's station WSPC in October.³⁹ WLIB (New York) was purchased by a group in New York.⁴⁰ Twenty-one stations were reported to have been Black-owned in November of 1972.⁴¹ In September of 1976, the figures were 56 Black-owned stations.⁴² The latest figures released in March 1980 by the National Association of Broadcasters indicated that there are 105 Black-owned stations in America.⁴³ One station, KBBG, is located in the author's home town of Waterloo, Iowa.

ACCESS TO BROADCASTING FACILITIES

There are essentially three ways to enter the broadcasting business: entry by purchase, entry by challenging license renewal, entry by acquisition of unused frequency.⁴⁴ In each case, however, there are barriers which face the prospective buyer.

1. Entry By Purchase

According to the Report on Minority Ownership in Broadcasting, the simplest of the three methods of entry into broadcasting is by purchasing an existing facility.⁴⁵ However, it is also noted that buying an attractive broadcast property is especially difficult because potential Black owners are excluded from knowledge of the availability of such facilities.⁴⁶ This system of exclusion is characterized by the "old boy network."⁴⁷ The system is important because once the owner of a station has agreed to sell, and the buyer is found qualified, the Federal Communications Commission is prohibited from determining if a third party may be better qualified.⁴⁸

2. Entry By Challenging License Renewal

The Communications Act of 1924 permits challenge at renewal time to the licenses of existing stations, but in practice few challenges ever succeeded.⁴⁹ First, there is the problem of time and cost involved in a hearing proceeding. Secondly, there is a lack of clear standards associated with determining qualified applicants.⁵⁰ There is also some underlying conflicts between two FCC policy considerations: (1) the policy to renew the license of an incumbent licensee who operates his facilities

in accordance with appropriate standards and (2) the policy to consider honorably and encourage minority ownership.⁵¹

3. Entry by Acquisition of Unused Frequency

The third method by which an applicant may acquire a broadcast facility is by applying for a new station on an unused frequency. Unfortunately there are too few unused frequencies available, and those that are available are not likely to be in major urban areas.⁵² Perhaps the FCC should take action to increase the number of available frequencies and give public notice of a vacant frequency.⁵³ This undoubtedly would result in competing applications which would demand a comparative hearing to determine which applicant would best serve the public. This licensing process would be a drain on finances and patience with no promise of receiving a license.

FINANCING BLACK RADIOA. Finding Funds

The principal obstacle for Blacks trying to enter the broadcast business appears to be the availability of funds. Most Blacks seriously interested in buying a radio station do not have the start-up capital. Those who do, probably have accumulated money through conservative investments and would rather settle on guaranteed investments to insure that their dollar remains stable.⁵⁴

The Federal Communications Commission does not engage in funding of broadcast ventures.⁵⁵ Thus they are in no position to aid Blacks in securing loans, even though they are dedicated to the concept of Blacks entering into broadcasting.

Lacking the financial resources unfortunately, makes it necessary for Blacks to find a lending institution to finance the broadcast facility. Experience has shown that Blacks face unusual problems in acquiring financing. Much of this can be attributed to the fact that prospective Black licensees, in most instances, have limited experiences in managing broadcast properties, being regarded as high financial risk and a history of having a lack of experience in handling large sums of money.⁵⁶

Prices of radio stations vary greatly. For example, a radio station in Boston was sold for \$13.6 million dollars in 1972. The same year one sold for \$15.1 million dollars; one in San Jose, California went for \$450,000.

The scarcity of frequencies allows White owners to escalate the price and Blacks, realizing the value of owning their own facilities, are compelled to pay these exorbitant amounts. This has led some

Blacks to call these new prices a "Black tax" or "nigger tax."⁵⁷

Before examining the various sources of funding there are other factors that a potential buyer must be aware of. These factors are considered by the financial specialist who evaluates a proposal. One such factor is the presenting of a Financial Showing. The following items are of importance to the Financial Showing:⁵⁸

1. Making a Financial Showing: The current Federal Communications Commission, indicates that an applicant must demonstrate the availability of sufficient funds to meet cash requirements through the first year of operation.
2. Loans: The applicant must show the ability to meet the first year's interest and principal payments. Balance sheets must support debt equity commitments from individuals or corporations.
3. Financing: It is necessary for the Applicant to secure financing before approaching either the broker or seller. The reasons for this are: 1) a good broadcast property will not be available by the time the buyer approaches a lending institution and processes the necessary paperwork and 2) sellers are often quite sensitive to indiscriminate circulation of their financial reports.
4. Management Portfolio: The portfolio is used to measure the potential longevity of the business. The portfolio should show that the applicant has strong management abilities in the following areas: a) administration b) sales c) programming and d) operations management.

B. Methods of Financing⁵⁹

Regardless of the previous mentioned obstacles, Blacks entering broadcasting will have to develop methods of financing.

1. Local Banks

Most of these banks are usually very limited in market area and generally know very little about the broadcasting business. Most of these banks would try to avoid lending money on the basis of potential cash flow. Their preference would be for lending on the basis of hard

assets. These banks tend to be more interested in short to medium term lending (3-5 years). This would make it difficult for a station purchaser because it is difficult to amortize a transaction in less than five years.

On the other hand, a financial partnership with a local bank can be productive for a buyer. The bank could provide seed money to begin the station acquisition process. Secondly, local banks can provide the short-term financing to cover seasoned fluctuations in station income. Third, a good relationship with a local bank can provide a new station owner with an introduction to the local business community.

2. Regional Banks

Regional banks serve one or more states. Because they are wider in scope they may be more amenable to lending amounts of money large enough to cover the purchase of a station.

Since these banks are usually located some distance from the station, lending officers would want to see a very complete financial proposal, a very good operating and financial plan for the life of the loan.

3. Money Center Banks

Money center banks are located in large cities and have a national clientele. Some of these banks probably have had some experience in making broadcasting financing. It would seem that this type of bank would be a likely source of financing for broadcasting. However, banks of this size probably tend to make loans of a relatively large size to established corporations, and the purchaser of a single station may fall outside the scope of these bank's lending activities.

4. Insurance Companies

Insurance companies have been known to finance the purchase of

broadcasting facilities. Insurance companies are usually interested in long-term loans of from 10-15 years, of which the minimum amounts lent are normally far larger than the amount necessary to purchase a single station. Therefore, most insurance company financed purchases have been of station groups.

An insurance company will require that it be considered the primary lender and request the same security interests as those demanded by banks.

5. Government Assistance

The Small Business Administration (SBA) or the Office of Minority Business Enterprise (OMBE), has offered itself as a source of help through the federal government. They do not make loans themselves, but assist an applicant in obtaining loans with their guarantee behind them, provided that the applicant meets their requirements. With this guarantee behind the applicant, a bank will take more of a risk.

These organizations also pose a couple of problems. One, a licensee should not have to be accountable to any government agency other than the FCC. Feelings may exist that the government may influence judgement of the programming of the station. Secondly, the government has been charged with investing their funds in conservative, low risk businesses, instead of investing in enterprises like radio broadcasting.⁶⁰

6. Investment Groups

This may be the easiest entry into the broadcasting business. An investment group is a conglomerate of people who will pool their resources together to purchase a broadcast facility. This plan is less complicated because you do not have the problem of stockholders requiring immediate repayment.

The Economics of Programming

Presently there are approximately 540 radio stations programming anywhere from 15 minutes to 24 hours a day to the Black Community. Twenty per cent of these radio stations allot 100 per cent of their air time for Black programming. The great majority of these stations are white-owned.⁶¹ With this keen competition, any potential Black owner needs to have the ability to develop programming that will be in tune with the total Black experience.⁶²

Historically, the white-owned broadcasting hierarchy has been an insult to the Black American. These Black-oriented stations which were white-owned have been of service and relevance to the Black community in the area of music only. By playing rhythm and blues throughout the week and gospels on Sunday, but beyond that, these stations have generally neglected to fulfill the needs of the Black community.⁶³

Another example of white-owned radio stations totally insulting Black Americans, is that of the all gospel station KNWS in Waterloo, Iowa. They very openly show their insults, by sending all promotional copies of Black gospel music to Black-owned station KBBG, thus having a policy of not airing any Black gospel music.⁶⁴

White owners have been known to have told Black radio personnel who began airing crucial public information to "Get back to that music, boy... don't spend your time trying to educate colored people on my station."⁶⁵

However, some Black station managers have defined this type of format as a key to economic success, insisting that soul music is what Black people want. As one Black executive stated, "we don't dictate taste, our listeners do."⁶⁶

WABC in New York indicates that familiarity is the key to success. Using WABC as an example. The Program Director at WABC, first of all,

only plays records once they have made a hit on their own merit, thereby eliminating the guesswork out of programming.⁶⁷ The guideline disallows the staff to play their personal music preference to the listeners. With all of the records being pre-selected and coded, the disc jockeys are confined to introducing records, conducting promotional contents, and reading commercials.⁶⁸ This allows programming presented at WABC based on logic, not on the whims of the station staff.

Ironically, Black Americans are not interested in listening to only soul music for 24 hours. Arbitron studies have shown the Black people want to listen to more than just soul music. The study listed "all news" formats as the number three station type Blacks listened to.⁶⁹ Blacks' concern for quality programming has been demonstrated since the mid-1960's. Black groups through the country have been preparing petitions requesting that the FCC not renew the licenses of hundreds of stations which were felt not to be serving the interest of the Black community.⁷⁰ In September of 1972, a group in Kansas City rallied for better programming from station KWKI, shouting that "the Goodfoot is not the essence of Black radio."⁷¹

Blacks in the past, for the most part, have not listened to the news because it has alienated them. News that was usually carried on Blacks, was usually in response to a racial conflict. This information would usually be only "official," police directed announcements.

Black owners have tried in vain to implement format changes that provide a positive image of Blacks in the area. Station KBBG in Waterloo, Iowa does this by providing news items about Blacks on both the local and national level. National Blacks news is programmed by subscription from Sheraton Black News Network after being in existence for three years, while no White-owned station in the entire state has ever subscribed to any Black news network.⁷²

It is my feeling that programming in the Black community could be more marketable and meaningful if less emphasis was placed on the environmental and behavioral conditions of the Black community. Jimmy Porter, observed that people turn their radio on for entertainment and if the programming is designed to constantly burden its listeners, this does little to increase audience size.⁷³

An example of providing a variety of programming to its listening audience is demonstrated through the motto utilized by KBBG radio station in Waterloo, Iowa. The motto used is: "To educate is to communicate, through the total Black Experience." This concept refers to their providing programming that reaches an entire Black audience.⁷⁴ The station uses a program format that combines all aspects of Black music.....jazz, gospel, soul. The educational programming includes news broadcasts and the "For Your Information" talk show which is aired twice daily. This format also attracts many of the white listeners who have an interest in jazz.

It appears that the current situation which exists in Black radio is how to provide programming for its listening audience that educates them while being able to survive financially at the same time. Hopefully, Black owners will use all the resources at their disposal to arrive at a quality product the people want to listen to. Benjamin Hooks summed up the situation very bluntly: "I understand the bottom line is making money. But if all you (Black owners) are going to do is give a chocolate coating to the old white plantation notion of Blacks that we've had all along, frankly, the Black community would be better off without you."⁷⁵

MANAGING THE BLACK RADIO STATION

Some Blacks who have taken over radio stations in America have had to give them up because they were unable to manage them. This has happened in California, Michigan and North Carolina.

Operating a radio station is obviously a risky business and one can afford few mistakes. Because failure to keep a station on the air at the first opportunity virtually eliminates any further consideration from the Federal Communications Commission for a second chance. Because of racism and discrimination in radio against Blacks, they have been shut out of management positions for the greater part of radio's history.⁷⁶ The ability to manage is probably the most important factor that determines the continued existence of a radio station.

The inability to manage a radio station endangers one's ability to program, jeopardizes the station's advertising, and minimizes any chances of increasing ratings. The manager must be able to provide solutions to any of the day-to-day problems involved with the broadcast operation, be aware of the latest technical developments in engineering, be knowledgeable of any special investigative reporting, should stay abreast of what's happening in Washington in terms of lobby efforts, deal with questions concerning revenue problems, and be conscious of any rising costs in relationship to the station and its budget.⁷⁷

The managerial aspect of a radio station is a special entity that has to be learned repeatedly. This is because radio is influenced by numerous technical variables, is under constant influence of a mobile population and an ever changing economy. For instance, it is possible that interest rates could jump to 11 or 12 percent in one year. If a station manager had a cash flow projection of 8 percent; it would be very difficult for a person to bring unexpected changes like this into perspective and continue to provide

quality programming.

One of the keys to Black-owned stations becoming successful and surviving is to have a very strong management structure. Numerous problems have prevented these radio stations from developing a strong management structure. Some have been prevented because of the enormous purchase prices of a decent facility. Most Black owners have not been able to hurl themselves over these financial barriers. This prevents station owners from being able to shift managers around to different stations in order to expose them to new situations within the radio business.

For a radio station to develop and maintain a sound management organization one must have qualified personnel in four critical positions:

- 1) Sales, 2) Operations, 3) News and 4) Engineering.⁷⁸

A. Sales

Sales is the key to success in management. There are too many Blacks entering broadcasting wanting to become instant radio stars. Since a radio station can only have so many stars, several radio personalities are ending up at a dead end.

Dr. Roosevelt Wright feels that there are too many Black radio stations that have their sales divisions manned by the wrong kind of people; people who have sold encyclopedias, insurance, vacuum cleaners and other tangibles. Intangibles are sold in radio...lifestyles, images, cultures, habits, and opinions. It would take a rare individual to perform the duties of a General Sales Manager.

In addition to the General Sales Manager the Black radio stations need both a National and Local Sales Manager. The General Sales Manager would handle the desk work and provide leadership for the National and Local Sales Managers. The latter two attend prospective social and business activities, etc., where many financial decisions are made; and visit various

advertising agencies on the national, regional and local levels. Too many General Sales Managers in the Black-owned stations are found trying to function in all of these capacities. It demonstrates a show of dedication, but results in one's work being counter-productive.

B. Operations

A General Operations Manager is needed at a Black-owned radio station. The Program Director, Music Directors, Announcers, Traffic, Continuity, and Productions Departments should all be responsible to the General Operations Manager.

Traffic is the most important link to external dollars of a station. This is where accounts are sold, and spots are cut and placed on the log. It is important that commercials are not misplaced after they are cut. This could cause a loss of revenue.

C. News

News is a very essential part of a station's operation because Blacks have failed miserably in the past to deliver the news. A well-trained News Director, a Public Relations Officer, a Public Service Announcements Director and good writers are needed to ensure quality work. In many Black stations you still find the disc jockey reading copy from the AP or UPI wire.

News can be sold easier than entertainment programs if you can capture the imagination of the audience. This can not be done however if the News Director does not know their market, their audience, their competition, their profession, and be dedicated to providing the truth to its audience.

D. Engineering

If people can not hear the station, nothing can happen nor can a station

establish credibility with advertisers if it is continuously off the air for "technical reasons." This should not even be the case when new equipment is installed. Many Black stations do not have a full time Chief Engineer on staff. These stations usually contracted with an engineer to come in and check equipment weekly. This may cause machines to become dirty more often and affect the air sound.

Many Black-owned stations go with the minimum requirement in engineering staff...and individual with a Third Class FCC license instead of hiring the professional needed. Such radio stations can not become the number one sellers of air time.

When Black radio owners become able and willing to hire the right kind of people they will begin to establish a reputation of being efficient.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH

It has been determined that Black radio has developed through three stages and is now trying to be born into the American economic system. Until then the radio industry has been in total control by White Americans. Because of the contributions of Black Americans during the second stage of Black radio development, one could safely say that Black Americans played an important role in saving major sectors of the radio industry from financial ruin in the late 1940's. No documents have ever been produced to indicate that any White-owners switched to an all-Black format in order to serve the needs of the Black community during the second stage of Black radio's development. This medium however has provided a high quality of information dissemination and eventually will better their broadcast performance.

It has also been revealed that finances are a dominant factor that Black owners face. Blacks have had to pay very high prices for stations and have had to struggle with the traditional sources of financing. Blacks need to engage in more imaginative financing plans to resolve this problem.

There is also a need for the Black media sales personnel to acquire the necessary skills required to convince advertisers to purchase air time on their stations. Nominal advertising dollars would not allow the stations to hire professional people. As a consequence the programming remains dull and in general suffers.

The bulk of the listening audience for Black stations are teenagers. This is because many of the Black stations continue to constantly play the blaring sound and the non-stop rhythm and blues format. It was also observed that the Black community wants to listen to more than 24 hours of "soul music." If Black stations want to legitimize themselves with the financial world, who happen not to be teenagers, they must provide a music format that

caters to all audiences.

The most crucial aspect of a Black radio station operation is securing a qualified management team. This team must possess both the ability to obtain financial resources and produce unique programming. Black owners also need to improve their staffing procedures and salary considerations.

Presently there has not been too much done in the area of Black broadcasting. With this medium occupying fifty percent of the Black American's listening time, Black researchers can no longer afford to ignore it. Black radio must be given scholarly support to record its growth.

In addition to recommendations in this paper I suggest the following recommendations as supplemental:

- All available literature on Black radio should be assembled into a bibliography. This information would be useful for scholars, students and to both owners and potential owners.
- The history of each existing Black-owned radio station should be recorded. Focus should be on the socio-political, legal and economic factors that help bring the facilities into existence.
- A list of all financial investment firms interested in financing broadcasting ventures should be assembled.
- A rating service that would use the Black population as its universe should be developed. This would allow Black owners to receive more accurate reportings.
- Marketing research could be done in areas where Black radio stations exist, to assist Black owners in trying to maximize the revenue that is available.
- Studies should be conducted to determine what impact Black radio has on the language development, one's ability to calculate, read, and write. Since so many people, especially

Black children listen to the Black radio a great percentage of their time, these serious problems need to be analyzed.

- Black owners and managers should change their recruitment of staff techniques. Instead of Black-owners who know nothing about running a broadcast facility attempting to run their own stations or hire a friend who sells pots and pans maybe they should attend some Black University Career Conferences like many of the major corporations do and tap the talent emerging from these institutions.

CONCLUSION

The Black community needs are much more broader than the mere enrichment programs which are being delivered to a few of us and the privileged group. People are seeking out more than ever for true information because they have realized how valuable it is. It is the duty of the Black broadcasters to not only obtain this information, but to share it and in this economy, sell it if they expect to succeed financially. By accomplishing this Black broadcasters will help Black Americans achieve the freedom they have desired for so long.

TABLES

TABLE 1

FULL-TIME 1979
BROADCASTING EMPLOYMENT
TRENDS BY JOB CATEGORIES

	<u>Total Employment</u>	<u>Total Minorities</u>	<u>Total Women</u>
Officials & Managers	28,544	2,255 (7.9%)	6,464 (22.6%)
Professionals	42,895	5,688 (13.3%)	10,309 (24.0%)
Technicians	26,609	4,083 (15.3%)	2,205 (8.3%)
Sales Workers	16,165	1,302 (8.1%)	4,966 (30.7%)
Office/Clerical	22,826	5,520 (24.2%)	20,444 (89.6%)
Craftsmen	1,801	322 (17.9%)	176 (9.8%)
Operatives	958	252 (26.3%)	104 (10.9%)
Laborers	240	114 (47.5%)	26 (10.8%)
Service	<u>1,164</u>	<u>723</u> (62.1%)	<u>228</u> (19.6%)
TOTAL	141,202	29,259 (14.3%)	44,922 (31.8%)

CATEGORY EXAMPLES

Officials & Managers: Station Manager, General Manager, Sales Manager

Professionals: News Writer, Reporters, Announcers

Technicians: Engineers

Sales Workers: Account Executives

Office/Clerical: Secretaries, Administrative Assistants

Craftsmen: Building Trades, Foremen

Operatives: Carpenters, Attendants

Laborers: Gardeners, Car Washers

Service: Cleaners, Charwomen, Cooks

TABLE 2

Commercial & Non-Commercial

1979 Broadcasting

Employment Statistics

<u>Full & Part-time</u>	<u>Number of Employees</u>		<u>Percent of Total</u>	
	<u>1979</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1978</u>
Total Male & Female	169,248	164,726	100.0%	100.0%
Female Only	53,667	49,656	31.7%	30.1%
Minority Groups:				
<u>(Male & Female)</u>				
Black -	14,987	14,280	8.9%	8.7%
Hispanic -	7,345	6,746	4.3%	4.1%
Native American -	921	1,041	0.5%	0.6%
Oriental -	<u>1,707</u>	<u>1,470</u>	<u>1.0%</u>	<u>0.9%</u>
Total Minority	24,960	23,537	14.7%	14.3%
<u>Full Time</u>				
Total Male & Female	141,202	136,425	100.0%	100.0%
Female Only	44,922	41,103	31.8%	30.1%
Minority Groups:				
<u>(Male & Female)</u>				
Black -	11,982	11,234	8.5%	8.2%
Hispanic -	6,089	5,490	4.3%	4.1%
Native American -	798	907	0.6%	0.6%
Oriental -	<u>1,390</u>	<u>1,191</u>	<u>1.0%</u>	<u>0.9%</u>
Total Minority -	20,259	18,822	14.3%	13.8%

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