

STATE OF BLACK CHICAGO CONGRESS

## BLACK MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY



Garrard McClendon, Ph.D.

### **The Team**

Sheila Solomon, Telie Woods, Theodore McClendon, Charles Burns, Terrance Hill, Lillian Smith, Effie Rolfe, Jerry Riles, Rashanah Baldwin, Jeffrey Booker, Marc Loveless, Jeanette Forman, Monique Caradine, Jim Rose, Don Jackson, Kyra Kyles, Nikki Lynette, Ronald Childs, Briana Smith, Cheryl Pearson McNeil, Michael House, FG Carroll, Fatima Traore, Harry Parson, Kristal Rivers, Dr. Rachael Ross, M.D., Ph.D.

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# Defining Black Media

Media that caters to or reflects the Black Community. Media that is created by:

- I. Blacks for Blacks,
- II. Blacks for Mainstream consumption,
- III. Blacks for political, financial, or cultural and creative well-being,  
and/or,
- IV. Media that is owned by a Black principal,
- V. Media once owned by a Black principal, but content continues to cater to Blacks,
- VI. Media created by Black “influencers” or the influential,
- VII. Media created from a Black Social Justice Angle,
- VIII. Media from a focused, Black demographic,
- IX. Media that motivates Black people.

## Types of Black Media

Television, Radio, Magazine, Newspapers, Blogs, Smartphone APPs, Web, Theater, Film, Music, Book Publishing

## Statement of the Problem

### What is the problem?

There are several problems in today’s Chicago Black media landscape. In any endeavor, funding becomes a primary challenge, but in Black media, there are other factors including ownership, underrepresentation, misrepresentation, and the compromising of content. Although there are numerous forms of Black media in Chicago, many of the sources are undercapitalized which can lead to limited exposure, limited talent pool, limited access to sponsors, faulty or compromised distribution channels, limited ability to keep pace with news cycles, and the instability of new or transferred ownership. Ancillary problems are a lack of mentoring new media “potentials,” and whether the stories of a people of African descent will truly be told in Chicago.

From our SWOT analysis, we found that the weaknesses and threats of Black media in Chicago stemmed from negative perceptions, loss of readership and consumption, more established media companies not creating content for a younger demographic, finances, limited marketing, and weak or limited signals or stations for radio and television media.

### **Where is the problem?**

We concluded that the problem of Black media is found in physical spaces as well as non-physical ones. Physically or in terms of geography, Black media is concentrated on the South and West sides of Chicago, the suburbs, and collar counties of Cook, consisting of Will and Lake counties. Non-physical spaces are in the “cloud” or in Internet or Smartphone atmospheres. The problem isn’t the location as much as the lack of saturation of Black media in these physical and non-physical spaces.

### **Who bears the impact?**

The Black community bears the most impact of the problems listed above.

### **What is the extent of the impact and how long has it existed?**

The extent of Chicago’s Black media impact dates back to 19th and 20th century newspapers that transmitted news to African American pockets within the city. As the community evolved, more sophisticated means of media were developed, such as the magazine, individual radio programs, the evolution and purchase of a Black radio station, publishing houses, and the breakthrough of Black television programming.

### **What factors have shaped the history and evolution of the problem, including politics and economic status?**

Ownership, the necessity of innovation, segregation, technology and locale have been factors shaping the history and evolution of the problem.

## **Solutions and Possibilities**

(Strategies to Resolve Media Problems -Short Term and Long Term)

### **Black Content Relevance and Black Business Sustainability**

From our SWOT analysis, we found that the strengths and opportunities of Black media in Chicago were community support, name recognition, subject matter germane to community concerns, capacity building, independent voices not found in mainstream media, marketing directly to a Black consumer, greater value on Black life. We collected mission, vision and/or editorial purpose statements from Black media in Chicago. We also collected circulation, sales, listenership, viewership, audience attendance, demographic info, frequency, etc. from Black Media in Chicago.

The Black Media and Technology Sub-Committee of the State of Black Chicago Congress proposes the following DREAM POSSIBILITIES for Black Chicago Media. We propose and suggest:

1. A 24-Hour Black Television News Network to be created in Chicago – this African American CNN of sorts can be developed by a team of news experts in the city who value news content told by an African American viewpoint. This cooperative will be reached by blending financial and creative newsroom resources that already exist in Chicago.
2. A Chicago Black News APP for SmartPhones and Tablets can be created by GenTech: Digital Media and Technology Center in Chicago, a cooperative of millennials headed by Debi Thompson. The technology, coding, and writing can be facilitated by the students at GenTech. The content and creative development can be a collaboration of every credible Black news source in Chicago. This APP can revolutionize Black Chicago news.
3. Television content that broadcasts the most talented and progressive Blacks in Chicago – this content is already being developed by several media content creators including Carl West at Truth B Told and Garrard McClendon at the McClendon Report. The gentlemen are currently negotiating contracts with major Chicago media outlets.
4. That Black media in Chicago become more unapologetically Black
5. A television show that highlights each Black Ward and Alderman in Chicago
6. A Black TED Internet Network (Technology Entertainment Design): Ideas Worth Spreading with an African American Presentation Roster – fostered by Kristal Rivers, this TED network will be launched as a lecture series to be broadcast on the internet and eventually to television.
7. That Black radio stations boost signals to reach larger audiences – this initiative can come only from current owners who wish to invest more capital into their stations.
8. That Black media outlets use the Nielsen Report to platform more sponsorship. Crucial to the use of this report would be for Black media outlets to individually meet with Senior Vice President of the Nielsen Company. Her availability to

share the report is priceless, but far underutilized by media outlets. Cheryl Pearson McNeil is a major executive who can add to Black media success.

9. That a Black Internet channel be born to create and distribute Live Streaming and Pre-Programmed content – this can be done by anyone with the imagination to create content that will gather an audience of viewers on a regular basis. i.e. The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl.

10. A new virtual Black book publishing house in Chicago using iBooks Author, Amazon, Audible, and ePub channels – This may be an option for two existing publishing houses (Third World Press and African American Images). The concept will be pitched to several publishers.

11. That every African American family in Chicago subscribe to or financially support at least one form of Black media originating in Chicago. A radio campaign can be blitzed to encourage an awareness of how important it is to subscribe to Black media.

12. Invest in Black technology incubators for system and APP designers / invest in Black media incubator to promote technological advancement

## Key Stakeholders

The groups who will be instrumental in resolving the problems concerning Black media in Chicago are:

- African American residents in Chicago, Black organizations, Black State Senators and Representatives, African American businesses, and a short list of Black Media Sources in Chicago (+10K audience and -10K audience ) found below:

- Ebony/Jet, Chicago Defender, WVON, Clear Channel Stations that have Black playlists (WGCI, V103, Bean Soup Times, Final Call, Rollin' Out, Crawford Radio Stations, Austin Community News, Chatham News, Crusader, Citizen, Don Jackson Productions, Burrell Media, Flowers Communications, Swank Public Relations, Target Market News, 316, Soul Train, Think Positive Magazine, WYCC PBS Chicago (Largest Black Run PBS station in U.S.), CAN-TV, WCSU, WKKC, Black Youth Project, TrueStar Magazine, Black Ensemble Theater, ETA, Chicago record labels, Harold Washington Cultural Center (Broadway in Bronzeville), TruthBTold, RAGE, People to People, Eng-

lewood Film Festival, Pepper Miller, Marv Dyson, Rainbow PUSH Productions (Word Network), State of Black Chicago Congress.

## Relevant Data and Final Thoughts on Sustainability

### **High use of media, minimum ownership, content control**

It is clear that Black media in Chicago is fully sustainable. The consumers of the media will have to be loyal to purchasing, patronizing, subscribing, and supporting the Black media forms in every way possible. Financial stability is a key issue, however the Black consumer dollar is a powerful source that is scattered. The Nielsen African American Consumers Report eloquently states that Blacks are the Most Loyal Media Consumers - Nielsen (2012 Report), Blacks spend \$1.1 trillion early, Black women influence most media buys, generation X,Y,Z use mobile technology more than boomers. A staple of sustainability will be in the education of Black media companies knowing that 91% of Blacks believe Black media is more relevant and that Blacks are more likely to buy a product if Blacks are portrayed positively in the advertising. Mainstream companies know this, however Black media companies are using the Nielsen data as aggressively as non-Black companies. African Americans could own not just a few, but dozens of television and satellite radio stations, as well as “cable service provider” companies based on the \$1 billion spent by Blacks on Cable TV subscriptions. Nielsen clearly denotes that the most loyal media consumers are Blacks. Money is probably the largest influence on Chicago Black Media’s ability to be ubiquitous in the Black community and influential in the mainstream. Buying habits in Chicago’s Black Community can cause a dramatic effect on Black media (intra-community) and mainstream perceptions of Blacks (inter-community).

Target Market News states that there are several large corporations that spend over \$600 million on Black Media Advertising. Chicago is the 3rd largest city in Chicago and garners some of this market share. Some of the companies are listed : Procter and Gamble, Johnson & Johnson, General Motors, McDonald’s, Verizon, AT&T, State Farm, Berkshire Hathaway, Wal-Mart, Comcast/NBC, Disney/ABC/ESPN, Nestle, Sony, Allstate, Kraft, Toyota, L’Oreal, Time Warner, Sprint, Hershey, and Ford Motor Company.

Chicago also has a strong list of African-American News Anchors, Reporters, and Hosts in mainstream media. This is significant because mainstream media must show a concern by offering a Black presence in TV news.

<b>ABC:</b> Cheryl Burton Jim Rose	Charles Thomas Karen Jordan	Val Warner* Host Hosea Sanders	Evelyn Holmes
<b>NBC:</b> Marion Brooks Michelle Relerford	Lauren Jiggetts LeaAnn Trotter	Christian Farr	Alicia Roman
<b>CBS:</b> Harry Potterfield Jim Williams Suzanne Le Mignot	Dorothy Tucker Derrick Blakley Pamela Jones	Ryan Baker Derrick Young Steve Baskerville	Courtney Gousman
<b>FOX:</b> Kori Chambers Dionne Miller	Darlene Hill Robin Robinson	Dawn Hasbrook	Tisha Lewis
<b>WGN:</b> Muriel Clair Robert H. Jordan	Frank Holland Gaynor Hall	Cortney Hall Micah Materre	Tonya Francisco

**ALL Radio Anchors on Black Stations (AM and FM) i.e. WVON**

**WBBM - Craig Dellimore, Felicia Middlebrooks**

**NPR - Richard Steele, Natalie Moore**

## Patterns

- Creative content themes - are limited, but the content limitation isn't necessarily a weakness or threat. Content theme can be advantageous because of exclusivity.
- Financial matrix patterns - can be limited due to exclusivity, however, mainstream sources rely on Black media for a "true, authentic, soulful, voice." i.e. what Blacks do (artistically, editorially, creatively) today, Whites do in 6-24 months, and mainstream adopts in 24-60 months. Black media can harness this economic power by owning the content.

## Power

Chicago is the premier test ground for Black Media. Ebony and Jet are still worldwide influencers in magazine publishing. WVON just celebrated its 50th Anniversary. The Chicago Defender's longevity has lasted over 105 years. Oprah Winfrey proves the test ground theory with HARPO, OWN, and OW Mag. The 35-year syndication success of Soul Train, created by Don Cornelius, started in Chicago. Steve Harvey proves it

through his radio, publishing, production company, films, and multiple television entities. Their Chicago litmus tests prove that “the world likes what Chicago audiences like.”

It is becoming clear that Black media in Chicago is a necessity, but the strengths and opportunities will have to outweigh the weaknesses and opportunities.

The 12-Point Solution Plan will be presented at the State of Black Chicago Congress Convention.

**\*\*\*Contact the State of Black Chicago Congress Black Media and Technology Committee for a complete list of Black Media sources and companies in Chicago.**