

# Old Fashioned Radio Offers A New Wrinkle In Living Color

by Dr. A. Lee Henderson



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The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat. *Proverbs 13:4*

I have written previously of my unexpected delights while traveling by automobile: the old-fashioned radio as an instrument of education and edification. Too often we reserve our radio listening time to the highways because there is a wealth of information that we can coin into productivity from the airwaves. One of these avenues is changing the face of America to its basically natural hue: the color of our own people self-determining the priorities of the news to implement changes for the common good!

Blacks have been provided for the last decade by the 1978 mandate of the Federal Communications Commission practices (FCC) to give preference to qualified minority applicants for broadcast licenses in radio and television.

In June the Supreme Court upheld this provision of the FCC which I believe can set the stage for encouraging further black entrepreneurs to move into broadcasting as an effective economic wedge. With our abilities to mount a greater success in the field of communications...whether in print, magazines, or the electronic format, we are providing the critical difference to address such major problems as impact the black community, yet take advantage of the public service requirements so sorely needed by minority communities.

Inspired by a recent article in the New York Times, I cite the quotation from Gerald D. Smith, an executive at black-owned WOL-AM in Washington D.C. Cathy Hughes, who has aired sensitive issues raised by the arrest, of Mayor Marion S. Barry, Jr. on drug charges on her call-in radio show, bought WOL in 1980 under the new minority ownership policies implemented by the FCC in 1978.

Said WOL executive Smith, "As so often is the case with minorities, until you get in the front door, you can't move around the house."

That "house" in the communications field should provide us with the beginning of what can develop into one of the most powerful agencies for self-growth on the agenda of Afro-Americans in the coming century.

We can seek to further the advances already made if we seize the moment to capitalize upon the pioneering efforts of those who have already distinguished themselves in the national communications field.

Ironically, the fictional film presentation of Spike Lee's "Do The Right Thing" emulated the physical conditions Cathy Hughes established for her radio station by moving it from Georgetown to a visible entity that passers-by can watch as they take a "store front" view of the announcers at work. This has been a mainstream attraction in Los Angeles for radio station KIEV anchored in the ARCO Center shopping mall in the hub of the underground arcade.

Hughes opted to shift the music programming at her station to talk-and-music format which led the way to increasing community awareness of vital race sensitive issues that would previously have been addressed from the myopic mainstream persuasion, if at all.

The statistics on minority ownership of radio and television released by the FCC encourage us further to take a more active role in exploring these areas for growth and self-empowerment. Present station owners in financial distress or for other reasons exploring the sale of their stations are provided tax advantages for minority buyers. Increases of 1 percent in 1978 to about 3.5 percent today in minority ownership tell only a part of the story for the past and for the future. There exist 12,000 radio licenses and 1,200 television licenses, and among them 182 radio stations and 17 television stations are licensed to 110 companies owned by blacks.

These figures are documented by the National Association of Black-Owned Broadcasters, a Washington trade group. Other minorities, says the FCC are less represented among owners.

The frank and forthright statement of James S. Winston, executive director and general counsel to the black broadcasters' group decries the responsibility of the owners to increase minority programming. The prime purpose of ownership

goes beyond that and entails successful programming, solid financial operation, and the commitment to use a portion of the time allotment for public service purposes. However, most minority owners, he reveals, give substantial time and major concerns to airing minority issues with the hope of impacting change in better employment, drug prevention and abuse, and making strides against the disease of racism.

The greatest change has been seen in radio!

Radio is proving itself the adversary of hard-necked bigotry, confusion and misunderstanding against minorities. Radio is a source of ongoing educational entertainment to move us forward in seeking action programs and action alternatives to indifference. Indifference can suffocate our progress. Radio galvanizes us to take a stand SOMEWHERE when it feeds us its issue-oriented jolts of electrical energy.

The story of an Aleut and Eskimo Company minority purchase of WTNH, and ABC affiliate in Anchorage is inspiring. The station aired "For A Drug Free Generation" and allocated all of its resources to pre-empt prime time for its coverage! They had never dared to do such a revolutionary thing in the past and risk alienating the advertisers or audiences. The success of their venture was noted. The 6,500 shareholders of minority Aleut and Eskimos has purchased 11 radio stations and WSMV-TV in Nashville as well as WTNH-TV. Both TV stations have won awards, notes George V. Kriste, a Cook Inlet Communications executive...the owner company on record for the minority purchase plan.

Inspiration comes from W. Don Cornwell, a black, who left Wall Street a few years ago to form Granite Broadcasting Corporation. They operate and own two ABC and two NBC station affiliates. Cornwell's goal is economically broader than the radio aims and objectives. He avoids the "narrowcast" in favor of maintaining a financially viable, growth-oriented enterprise.

But rest assured that the minority ownership has had a strong impact upon the treatment of minorities in newscast coverage and public affairs.

Buffalo became the nation's largest black-owned television station in 1986 when it was bought from Capital Cities by Queen City Broadcasting Inc. The chairman and major stockholder is soft-drink executive J. Bruce Llewellyn of

Philadelphia, an Afro-American. It is an ABC affiliate station, notes its president an general manager Stephen H. Kimatian who stresses the high interest in happenings in the black community.

Programs are selected with value to minorities, notes Kimatian. "Buffalo Beat" is a locally produced community affairs program which zeroes in on minority issues of concern for Buffalo's 28 percent minority population as well as for the vast majority who are vitally concerned with the overall picture.

As a Publisher, I often have to remind myself and others that in servicing the minority needs the majority is also well served. Readership is encouraged, a mental activity that produces its own rewards for everyone impacted. A publisher provides information as fuel for thought.

Literacy, high on President Bush's agenda, is promoted through the written word. How marvelous to be a part of that agenda...you the reader, and our Portland Observer.

But I do not flatter one media above the other as being the sole key to battle the inequities blocking the social system like sludge in the gears of a Rolls Royce! Will radio change the system by itself?

No! Will television change the system by itself? No!

Will newspapers and the print media change the system by itself? No!

The urgent agenda we set to satisfy the anxiety of minority concerns can impact the superstructure of government, taxation, and economic progress. Our concerns must be aggressively addressed by ALL THE MEDIA!

To compete with each other at the cost of our own ultimate self-destruction is a foolhardy risk. The rooster that crows, "I'm better than you are!" is a sorry bird when he's singled out for that reason...and roasted!

Health competition generates productivity theoretically.

Unhealthy competition attacks the supportive base and undermines the superstructure of synergistic success. We'll topple like a house of cards if we set up an opposition instead of trying to sell our own particular service for its specialized demographics on the basis of our own character as a media force.

As a publishing journalist my crusade is to attract advertisers seeking the public whose habits include reading and who reflect the good taste and upward mobility of an educated public driven to higher

quality and self-improvement. The consumer-aware corporation is our prime advertiser and we anticipate unparalleled growth in the future!

As we prosper, so will our nation, when we get right down to cause and effect.

My friend Bruce Merrin with offices in Encino, California recently returned from Portland to share his public relations expertise and executive knowledge with the July International Group of Agents and Bureaus newsletter. Bruce Merrin's Celebrity Speakers Bureau, tops on the west coast and featuring luminaries from sports, showbiz, and high executive Fortune 500 places is often called upon to lend a speaker to a banquet or meeting occasion by another bureau.

"It is known as co-brokering," Bruce told me. "And it is successful for everyone concerned only when we define cooperation. Cutting each other's throat to grab a celebrity without the other broker knowing about it is suicide. None of us would enjoy the prosperity of our respective businesses if we failed to observe the rules of self-survival: Do unto others what you want them to do unto you!"

Bruce Merrin wishes to set up an Oregon-based wing of his successful PR and Celebrity Speakers Bureau. Like any business man he knows that profit is the name of the game when played by the ultimately high standards of self-excellence.

As the Portland Observer publisher, I can assure you that our advertising base is our heartland for survival. Radio should not raid it. Television must not raid it. Any more than we plan to raid them! We should establish guidelines for enhancing each other's domain, and only then shall we empower ourselves in a triple-media thrust to unshackle the demons of depression and regression zeroing in.

The albatross of self-defeatism can be unshackled as all of us look forward, with realism, toward the future.

These times are Ours, if we want them badly enough.

I say that we do. Let's challenge the communications systems of the world to unite for saving mankind, and allow the significant Afro-American minority to make its progressive mark.

Our heard voices shall be all the more purposeful as we satellite our communication stars in a firmament of

glorious stardom for our increasing, substantive wealth, materially and spiritually.

One small glow upon the dial of old-fashioned radio can electrify our frequencies in living color. One small glow upon the TV screens of new-fashioned digital transmission can edify the whole world in living color.

One small glow upon the black-and-white newspaper can communicate to hemispheres in living color.

Multiplied, the media impact of information can illuminate the stratosphere.

Note: Bruce Merrin was elected 2nd vice president of IGAB officers at the Chicago Conference of International Group of Agents & Bureaus.

We wish to thank Jeremy Gerard of the New York Times, National Edition, for providing the statistics to us on broadcasting as of August 1, 1990.

## NBA Predicts High Minority Convention Turnout

What minorities can expect from the Supreme Court and the strategies they should adopt to affect the high Court's decisions in the 1990s will be among the issues discussed during the National Bar Association 65th Annual Convention, July 29 through August 4, 1990, at the Westin Galleria, Houston, Texas.

A projected 1500 minority lawyers from across the country will attend the NBA's first convention of the new decade. The convention theme "Toward Justice", signals the bar association's call for greater activism from civil rights forces to move the country closer to racial and economic equality by the year 2000.

The NBA Presidential Showcase Seminar on Tuesday, July 31 at 9:30 a.m. will center on minorities and the Supreme Court. The seminar titled, "Minorities and the Supreme Court in the 1990s: Reconstruction Revisited?" will compare past and present decisions on minorities and highlight upcoming court decisions which may have a potential impact on minorities.

Other major seminar panel discussions at the convention include: "The Future of the Historically Black College and Law School," Wednesday, August 1 at 10:00 a.m.; "The President's Forum on Corporate America: The Impact of Advancement of African Americans in the Corporate Sector," Thursday, August 2 at 9:30 a.m.; and "Diversity in the Legal Profession: Strategies for Change," Friday, August 3 at 9:30 a.m.

The National Bar Association, the nation's oldest and largest minority bar association was founded in 1925 in Des Moines, Iowa by twelve African American legal pioneers. Today, the NBA has 73 affiliate chapters and a professional network of over 12,000 lawyers, judges, legal scholars and law students.

## TLC-TNT Summer Camp Returns

The Tender Loving Care-Think 'n Try (TLC-TNT) Program kicked off another two weeks of summer camp on Monday, August 13, at 9:00 a.m. at Portsmouth Middle School, 5103 N. Willis Blvd. for youth citywide.

The Bureau of Parks and Recreation and Portland Public Schools are co-sponsors of the camp which will run until August 24, starting each day at 9:00 a.m. and ending at 3:00 p.m.

The program combines academics, sports and physical fitness activities with intensive group and individual work on personal goal setting, self-esteem building, respect for self and others, peer pressure counseling, basic communication concepts, and study skills.

Consistent individual attention is given to each participant along with strong parent involvement and constant monitoring by positive role models. The programs are staffed by a combination of professional teachers, recreation professionals, community volunteers, and high school and college age counselors, many of whom have participated in programs in prior years and are examples of its four year success.

The program is unique in that it provides cultural, social, emotional and academic guidance for youth at risk in the community.

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### DISCLAIMER..

Last week, the *Observer* published a letter to the editor written by Woody Broadnax. The letter represented Mr. Broadnax's perspective on the *Stay Clean Inc.* controversy. As with all "letters to the editor", the views expressed by Mr. Broadnax are not necessarily supported by the *Observer*. Mr. Broadnax is not an *Observer* staff writer; the *Portland Observer* opted to publish his letter to present an alternate view on the *Stay Clean Inc.* controversy.



## PERSPECTIVES

By Professor McKinley Burt

### "Mama, You Ought to See All the Xmas Trees Out Here!"

"And the lawns stay green all year." That's what I wrote home when I first came to the Pacific Northwest. A teenage high school dropout from St. Louis, Missouri, the adventure had begun -- working as a track laborer or as a section hand for the Southern Pacific Railroad. High up in the Willamette National Forest above Oak Ridge or Eugene, the mile post read "800 miles to San Francisco." (Time: Late 1930's).

Obviously, the "Perspectives" column is still out in the "boonies" (boondocks). This period was a prelude to the activities I described in the previous columns. At 'home' one could work across the Mississippi River in Decatur, Illinois during summer school vacation for \$18 a five and a half day week on the Wabash Railroad -- while if you shipped out to Oregon you could make the fantastic sum of \$32 a week. And during the winters of 18 foot snow drifts, twenty-hour shifts could see you sending home as much as \$500 in a month.

You would have to emerge from a trap door in the roof of the little cabins furnished for quarters -- coal stoves to cook on and huge tin tubs for baths and washing. The ice boxes were fashioned to the porches of the cabins with log chains -- but, still, hungry bears would sometimes come up at night, rip them loose and carry the works down into the

canyon to break open and feast. At the end of a shift of clearing snow from the switches of a 'house track' it could be difficult getting home. Walking on top of the drifts you had to sweep newly-fallen snow from the roof in order to find the trap door.

Working on the track in winter was a very hazardous activity, for falling snow muffled almost all sound. You cannot hear a train whistle (steam) or the clarion blast of a streamliner diesel. A 'safety man' would stand beneath the warning semaphore (which could not be seen through the driving snow). When he heard a warning click (barely) he would plod down the line of men, slapping each on the back. It would seem only seconds later that a 70 mile-an-hour passenger train would swoosh by, bound down grade for Portland. (Interestingly, a black man from Iowa invented a signaling device for use INSIDE THE ENGINE CAB, so that a locomotive engineer could determine if the track ahead was clear of trains -- even if snow or rain obscured the semaphore.

There is one thing I wish to bring to your attention, for it relates to the employment situation of young people today -- and to many social traumas from education to gangs. Like most late teenagers of those days, I knew how to operate several dozen types of machinery and equipment. And because of a thorough grounding in the basics (math and language), I could read and interpret detailed instructions -- and could carry out many tasks unsupervised. This background was rather typical of the times -- even for many who went no farther than the 8th grade.

I totaled up this 'equipment savvy' at one time: back hoe, welder, truck driver, leather cutter, steam cleaner, freight handler, chicken plucker (smiles), compressor operator, push cart delivery of coal and ice, freight checker, landscaper assistant, grinder, clerk, porter, bellhop, dishwasher, pinsetter, miscellaneous equipment in foundries, and much else.

All by the age of seventeen. It must be realized, of course, that in those days child labor laws were weakly enforced, and that many employers had none of the applicable insurance. But you were always busy after school and on weekends -- little time for nonsense or mischief.

Back to the mountains and forests of Oregon. Another thing that you wrote home about was, "You just think we've got mountains back there in the Ozarks -- those are hills, believe me." On the mountains there was both tragedy and comic relief. Men secured a 'grub stake' for the future, and others died. Some went on to become craftsmen and professionals and other stayed on the job until retirement -- or 'fell in their traces', the railroad often burying them up when no relatives could be located.

I remember the time we sent "Pete" down the mountain to get some liquor at Oakridge, 70 miles away. Hopping freights was the usual means of transportation and when he did not return the same evening, we went looking for him early the next morning. Pete had gotten to Oakridge all right, but had gotten drunk in town before hopping a freight back with a big sack of wine and whiskey. We found him where he had fallen off a flat car, his leg cut off just below the knee. He had stuck the stump in the snow and packed it in tightly. And there was Pete, stoned, singing at the top of his voice, "What took you so long?" he exclaimed. Relieved somewhat, we demanded, "What happened to the booze, man?" (he survived).

And then, too there were the "happy girls" who rode freights to the railroad and logging camps on paydays -- bringing 'happiness' and, sometimes, familiar ailments. In later years I was to meet several in Portland or Los Angeles -- proper, sedate matrons with respectable holding in rental units and/or a "good man." A quick wink or smile and then to pass on in the play of life. Affirmative action and non-discrimination before its time.

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