

Minority Media Ownership: “A NATIONAL DISGRACE”

The Federal Communications Commission — the agency tasked with protecting the public interest in broadcasting — has abandoned its mandate to ensure diversity in the U.S. media system. According to *Out of the Picture*, a new study by Free Press, racial and ethnic minorities are grossly under-represented in the national media market, with only 3 percent of television stations under the control of minority owners. Commissioner Michael Copps called the FCC’s failure to foster minority voices in U.S. media “a national disgrace” that demands immediate action.

Shut Out of TV Station Ownership

Out of the Picture found that people of color have been shut out from owning television stations — the nation’s most influential form of media. According to the study, racial and ethnic minorities make up 33 percent of the U.S. population but just 3.26 percent of all TV station owners. So it comes as no surprise that content on local stations rarely serves the needs of diverse audiences and their communities.

- 8 out of 10 Latino homes are not served by a Latino-owned station.
- 9 out of 10 African-American homes are not served by an African-American-owned station.
- 9 out of 10 Asian-American homes are not served by an Asian-American-owned station.

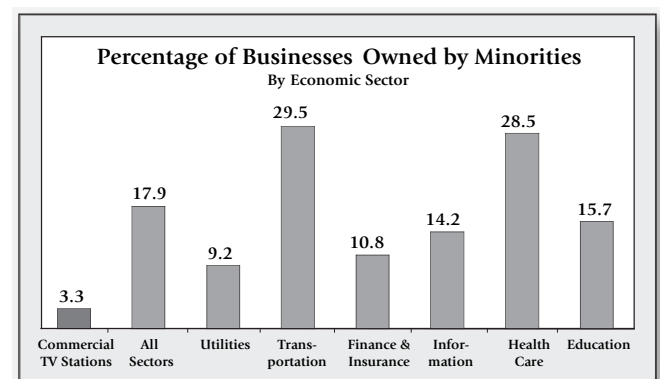
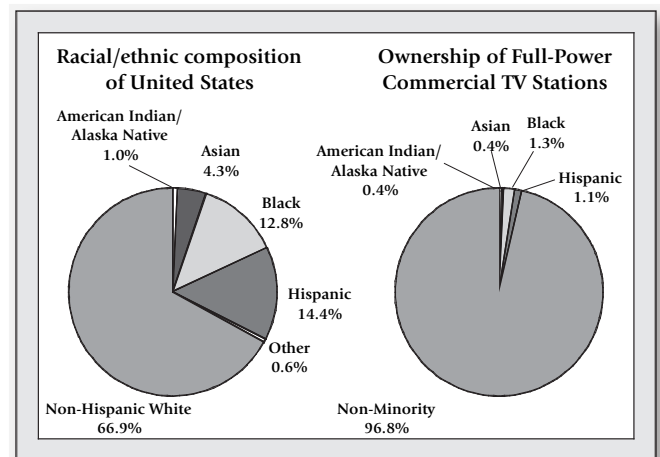
Minority ownership is much higher in other parts of the economy. In industries like transportation and health care, the number of minority owners is nearly 10 times greater than in the broadcast sector. The percentages of businesses owned by people of color have increased over the past several years in nearly every sector of the economy except broadcast TV.

More Consolidation, Less Diversity

The FCC is now attempting to worsen media concentration by allowing one company to own multiple television and radio stations, as well as the major daily newspaper in a single market. Further consolidation would hasten the disappearance of the few minority-controlled stations that remain. The biggest losers would be people of color — the very groups that the FCC has been specifically tasked by Congress to assist.

Out of the Picture found that:

- Minority station owners often own just one station and are particularly vulnerable to the effects of media consolidation.
- Minority owners thrive in more competitive markets.
- Minority production of local news is far more likely to occur in a competitive market.



Civil Rights Leaders Express Outrage

Civil rights leaders blasted the FCC for its failure to adequately address this crisis in minority media ownership.

"The findings here ... should be a national embarrassment. And the fact that some on the recent FCC have been more interested in giving more power to those who already have too much, rather than addressing decades of discrimination and ensuring that the little guy will get a chance, should be a national scandal."

— **Nancy Zirkin, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights**

"This is a critical issue for our community. Latinos continue to be severely underrepresented in the mainstream media in terms of employment, content and ownership. This report confirms what we strongly believe — that increased media concentration has significantly exacerbated this situation and that increasing diversity in media ownership could help stem it."

— **Janet Murguia, National Council of La Raza**

"This attempt by the FCC to change ownership rules once again will result in too few owning too much, at the expense of too many."

— **Gary Flowers, Rainbow/PUSH Coalition**

"In addition to being morally wrong, the lack of minority ownership is anti-competitive and inefficient. It deprives America's television viewers of the entrepreneurial, managerial and creative skills of a third of the nation's people."

— **David Honig, Minority Media and Telecommunications Council**

Take Action: Defend Media Diversity

Organizations

1. Join the StopBigMedia.com Coalition — an alliance of public interest, media reform, civil rights, organized labor and other groups that have joined together to fight runaway media consolidation (www.stopbigmedia.com).
2. Sign the "Media Diversity Now" letter. Call on the FCC to stop plans to unleash media consolidation without redressing the problems of minority representation (www.freepress.net/docs/ownership-diversity-fcc-letter.pdf).
3. Alert your members. Urge everyone to send comments to the FCC as the agency considers changing ownership rules (www.stopbigmedia.com/minoritymedia.php).

Individuals

1. File official comments. Tell the FCC to stop media consolidation and fulfill its obligation to foster diversity over the airwaves (www.stopbigmedia.com/minoritymedia.php).
2. Speak out in your community. Urge others to fight for a more diverse media system by attending hearings on media ownership (www.freepress.net/future).

