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BLACK CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

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Black Radio as Music Infrastructure

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CULTURETECHLENS — "Culture, Clearly Seen." — Black Cultural Intelligence

1. Executive Summary

How did radio connect performers, records, advertisers, and audiences? In Chicago — the city that invented the Black radio DJ as a cultural institution — the answer is that radio *was* the infrastructure: not a channel music passed through but the physical, economic, and political plant that made Black music a business and Black audiences a public.

This brief traces that infrastructure from Jack Cooper's "All-Negro Hour" on WGBS in 1929 — the first Black DJ format hour, built on race records because they were cheaper than live talent — through the 1940s block-programming era on WGES (Al Benson, Richard Durham's dramas, "Negro Newsfront"), the 1963 launch of WVON ("Voice of the Negro") by Chess Records' Leonard and Phil Chess, the 1967–94 Black-soul and Black-owned era on 950 AM (WGRT, then Johnson Publishing's WJPC), the 1962–64 all-Black WYNR experiment on 1390, the disco and urban-contemporary reign of WGCI-FM 107.5, and the Hot Mix 5's live house mixes on WBMX 102.7 in the 1980s.

The mechanism is a circuit, documented link by link: performers and labels supplied records and promotion (including payola, regulated after 1960); DJs and program directors turned records into programming; advertisers and sponsors bought access to the audience that programming assembled; and audiences converted listening into record purchases, venue attendance, requests, ratings, and civic action — which in turn gave stations and artists leverage over labels and sponsors. The circuit's most consequential output was political: in 1983, WVON commentator Lu Palmer's "We shall see in '83" campaign helped elect Harold Washington,

Chicago's first Black mayor — during the station's *music* era, three years before its 1986 all-talk flip, a chronology this brief corrects against earlier CTL drafts.

Verdict in one line: The evidence establishes radio as Chicago's central Black music infrastructure — a two-way circuit of promotion, advertising, audience feedback, and political mobilization — while the exact magnitudes of its economic effects remain provisional.

2. Primary Research Question

How did radio connect performers, records, advertisers, and audiences?

Sub-questions: Who owned the stations, and how did ownership change what got played? What did advertisers buy, and what did sponsors cost stations? How did audiences talk back — through requests, record purchases, ratings, and votes? How did regulation (payola disclosure, minority-ownership policy) and technology (AM/FM, the transistor radio, the turntable) shape the circuit?

3. Why It Matters

Every streaming-era debate about playlist power, pay-for-play, and who controls Black music's distribution has a Chicago-radio precedent. WVON was bought by a record label (Chess), became the instrument of a mayoral campaign (Washington 1983), and ended Black-owned again (Midway Broadcasting) — three ownership regimes that changed the music. The Hot Mix 5 proved a radio show could invent a genre's distribution channel. Understanding this infrastructure is prerequisite to understanding Chicago house, Chicago soul, and the political economy of Black cultural production — and it is the historical baseline against which CTL should measure today's platforms.

4. Scope

- **Geography:** Chicago and its Illinois suburbs (Cicero, Oak Park, Harvey) — the FCC's Chicago radio market. National context (Motown, FCC policy, Soul Train syndication) only where it touches the Chicago circuit.
- **Period:** 1929 (Cooper's "All-Negro Hour") to 2014 (950 AM's conversion to Relevant Radio), with analytical weight on 1963–1994.
- **Inclusions:** Full-time and block-programmed Black-oriented stations; DJ careers that crossed stations; ownership changes; the advertising and promotion economy; the radio→electoral-politics link.
- **Exclusions:** White-appeal stations except where crossover listening is documented (1963); post-2014 WVON history in detail (its 1690 move is noted; full modern chronology is scheduled research); podcast/streaming successors.

5. Definitions

- **Black-oriented / Black-appeal radio:** Programming directed at Black audiences, whether or not the station was Black-owned. Ownership and orientation are tracked separately throughout this brief.
- **Block programming:** Leased time slots sold to individual DJs or sponsors (the 1940s–50s model); distinct from full-time format stations.
- **Race records:** Commercial recordings marketed to Black audiences (1920s–40s); crucially, exempt from the ASCAP performance ban, which made them the cheapest broadcast material available.
- **Payola:** Payment for airplay; after the 1960 Federal Communications Act amendments, undisclosed pay-for-play became illegal and labels routed promotion through independent promoters.
- **Shared-time operation:** Two licensees splitting broadcast hours on one frequency (WXOL/WCEV on 1450 from 1979).
- **The circuit:** This brief's analytical model — performers/labels → records & promotion → DJs/programmers → programming → advertisers/sponsors → audiences → purchases/attendance/requests/ratings/votes → renewed leverage for stations and artists.

6. Historical Context

Black Chicago radio began as an economic workaround. When Jack Cooper launched "The All-Negro Hour" on WGBS on November 3, 1929, he used recorded race records rather than live talent because records were cheaper — and because race records were exempt from the ASCAP ban on recorded music, they were legally the path of least resistance (Ellett 2013, via the McFarland *Encyclopedia of Black Radio*). By 1938 Cooper was buying afternoon time on WSBC and WHFC; at his 1947 peak he sold 40 hours a week across four stations, and his WAAF "Wardrobe Derby" was sponsored by National Credit Clothiers — the advertiser link present from the beginning.

The 1940s added a second layer: WGES's 1390 signal carried Al Benson's Sunday gospel program from 1945 (he went secular with blues, jazz, and R&B and became the top Black DJ of the late 1940s), while Richard Durham wrote Black radio drama — "Democracy–USA" (WBBM, 1946), "Here Comes Tomorrow" (WJJD, 1947, the first Black soap opera), "Destination Freedom" (WMAQ, 1948–50) — and Vernon Jarrett with Oscar Brown Jr. read "Negro Newsfront" on WJJD (1948–51), one of the country's first Black radio newscasts.

The postwar economics turned hostile to musicians and friendly to DJs: the 1942–44 recording ban and the rise of the 45 RPM single made records — not live bands — the station's cheapest content, and the transistor radio gave teenagers (Black and white) private listening. By 1963, as NPR Illinois later documented, white and Black Chicago teenagers were listening to the same stations — the crossover audience that made Black radio commercially powerful and politically threatening.

7. Key Findings

1. **The label bought the station.** On April 1, 1963, Chess Records owners Leonard and Phil Chess purchased 1450 AM (WHFC, Cicero) and launched WVON, "Voice of the Negro," with the "Good Guys" — Franklin McCarthy, E. Rodney Jones, Herb Kent, Wesley South, Pervis Spann — and GM Lucky Cordell. The performers→records→radio link was, at launch, a single corporate circuit (VERIFIED: three legislative sources).
2. **The 950 AM chain documents Black ownership economics.** WAAF → WGRT (1967, soul, $900,000) → WJPC (1973, Johnson Publishing, $1.8M, urban) → all-rap (1992) → sold 1994 ($8M). Daddy-O Daylie's shrinking morning jazz show on WGRT is a small, documented picture of format economics squeezing out jazz (SUPPORTED: Billboard, Jet, Ebony, Duncan's).
3. **The 1390 AM facility is a palimpsest of the whole story.** WGES block programming (Benson) → WYNR all-Black "Winner" (1962–64, with an FCC hearing over dropped foreign-language shows) → WNUS all-news (1964) → WVON (1975) → WGCI (1983) → a 1989–90 Black talk format → WGRB. The frequency carried every model in sequence (SUPPORTED: Broadcasting, Billboard, Chicago Tribune, FCC Call Sign History).
4. **1983 was a music-era political victory, not a talk-format one.** Lu Palmer's "Lu's Notebook"/"On Target" (10 p.m.–midnight on WVON 1450) coined "We shall see in '83," ran political-education clinics, and lost sponsors over his politics — and was, per two Congressional tributes and his Tribune obituary, the single most effective voice in electing Harold Washington. The station's Black talk format came in 1986, three years later. Earlier CTL drafts inverted this; the correction is load-bearing (VERIFIED: Palmer's 1989 Eyes on the Prize oral history, primary).
5. **The Hot Mix 5 industrialized club culture on FM.** From 1981, WBMX program director Lee Michaels put club DJs doing live house mixes on "Saturday Night Live, Ain't No Jive" — the City of Chicago's 2023 Warehouse Landmark Report confirms WBMX was among the first stations to broadcast live house mixes. When WGCI-FM poached three members for its "Jackmasters" in 1986, it proved the format's commercial value (VERIFIED for the broadcast fact; PROVISIONAL for roster and ratings details).
6. **The advertiser node cut both ways.** National Credit Clothiers sponsored Cooper in 1947; under Globetrotter, WVON cut community programming to sell more commercials (per Searcy); Palmer's sponsors withdrew over his politics. Advertising funded the infrastructure and disciplined it (SUPPORTED/PROVISIONAL).
7. **Regulation shaped the circuit at two joints.** The 1960 payola-disclosure amendments pushed label promotion into independent-promoter middlemen (Willie Dixon's autobiography: "no disc jockey was going to play your record then without you paying him"). The FCC's 1978 minority-ownership policy (Tax Certificate, Distress Sale) grew minority-owned stations from ~40 to ~323 by 1995 — the policy context for Midway Broadcasting's 1979 return to 1450 (SUPPORTED).

8. Evidence

The claim ledger (claim-ledger.json) grades 43 claims: 3 VERIFIED, 30 SUPPORTED, 8 PROVISIONAL, 2 DISPUTED. The strongest evidence clusters are: (a) three independent legislative tributes converging on WVON's 1963 launch, lineup, and ownership; (b) contemporary trade press (*Broadcasting*, *Billboard*, Duncan's) and the Black press (*Jet*, *Ebony*) for the 950 AM and 1390 AM chains; (c) Lu Palmer's own 1989 oral history for the 1983 campaign; (d) the City of Chicago's 2023 landmark report for the Hot Mix 5's broadcast significance. The weakest: audience-share figures (no Arbitron books consulted), the Motown "every song first" story (attributed lore), and Hot Mix 5 roster/rating details (fan-archivist sourcing).

9. Analysis — How the Circuit Worked

Performers/labels → records & promotion. Chess owning WVON collapsed the distance between label and station to zero; Motown's reported first-listen arrangement (lore, PROVISIONAL) is the same link in softer form. Payola was the link's shadow economy: Dixon's testimony describes a market where airplay had a price, and the 1960 disclosure rule didn't end the market — it professionalized it into independent promotion.

Records → DJs/programmers → programming. The DJ was the circuit's valve. Cooper's economics (records cheaper than talent), Benson's gospel-to-R&B crossover, Kent's "dusties" oldies invention at WBEE, the Hot Mix 5's live mixing — each shows DJs adding value labels couldn't: curation, personality, and eventually real-time music production on air.

Programming → advertisers/sponsors → audiences. Advertisers bought the assembled audience: clothiers in 1947, the full spot-load economy by the 1970s. But sponsors also constrained: Globetrotter's commercialization cut community programming, and Palmer's sponsors fled his politics — evidence that the advertiser node could veto as well as fund.

Audiences → feedback → leverage. Audiences closed the circuit five ways: buying records (the WXOL blues-sales bump, PROVISIONAL but structurally plausible), attending venues (Spann's 1960 B.B. King/Junior Parker concert), requesting songs, registering in ratings (the missing Arbitron layer), and voting (Washington 1983). Each feedback channel gave stations leverage over labels and sponsors — and gave artists leverage over stations.

Ownership as the master switch. Every change of owner changed the music: Chess (label synergy), Globetrotter/Gannett (commercialization, the 1390 move, the 1983 call change), Midway (Black ownership returning to 1450, the blues format, the 1986 talk flip), Johnson Publishing (Black corporate ownership on 950). The FCC's 1978 minority-ownership policy is the reason the Midway chapter exists in the form it does.

The missing link. The brief documents the circuit's structure at every node but cannot yet quantify its economics: no station rate cards, no label promotion budgets, no Arbitron books were consulted. The circuit is proven; its magnitudes are not.

10. Timeline

- **1929-11-03** — Jack Cooper's "All-Negro Hour" debuts on WGBS (SUPPORTED)
- **1938** — Cooper buys afternoon time on WSBC and WHFC (SUPPORTED)
- **1945** — Al Benson's Sunday gospel program begins on WGES 1390 (SUPPORTED)
- **1946-05-04** — Richard Durham's "Democracy–USA" premieres on WBBM (SUPPORTED)
- **1947-09** — "Here Comes Tomorrow" (first Black soap opera) on WJJD (SUPPORTED)
- **1948–51** — "Negro Newsfront" with Jarrett and Oscar Brown Jr. on WJJD (SUPPORTED)
- **1955** — WBEE (Harvey) launches R&B under Rollins Broadcasting (SUPPORTED)
- **1962-09-01** — McLendon buys 1390 AM ($1M + $1M non-compete); launches all-Black WYNR (SUPPORTED)
- **1963-01–04** — FCC hearings on WYNR foreign-language complaints (SUPPORTED)
- **1963-04-01** — WVON launches on 1450 AM; Chess purchase; the "Good Guys" (VERIFIED)
- **1964-09-03** — WYNR becomes all-news WNUS (SUPPORTED)
- **1966** — Don Cornelius hired at WVON (SUPPORTED)
- **1967** — WAAF sold ($900K); becomes soul-formatted WGRT (SUPPORTED)
- **1969-10** — Leonard Chess dies; family sells WVON to Globetrotter (consummated 1970) (SUPPORTED)
- **1970** — Soul Train pilot ($400 of Cornelius's money) (SUPPORTED)
- **1971-10** — Soul Train national syndication (SUPPORTED)
- **1973-05-29** — Johnson Publishing buys 950 AM ($1.8M) (SUPPORTED)
- **1973-11-01** — 950 AM becomes WJPC (SUPPORTED)
- **1975-02-05** — WVON moves 1450→1390 (5,000W); Globetrotter buys 1390/107.5 ($3.55M); 107.5 becomes disco WGCI "Studio 107" (SUPPORTED)
- **1978** — FCC minority-ownership policy (Tax Certificate, Distress Sale) (SUPPORTED)
- **1979** — Midway (WXOL, blues) and Migala (WCEV) take shared-time 1450 (SUPPORTED; month-level UNRESOLVED)
- **1980** — WGCI shifts disco→urban contemporary; WJPC begins nighttime operation (SUPPORTED)
- **1981** — Hot Mix 5 formed on WBMX (SUPPORTED for the broadcast fact; PROVISIONAL for roster details)
- **1983-10-03** — 1390: WVON→WGCI call change (FCC record)
- **1983** — Harold Washington elected mayor; Lu Palmer's WVON campaign pivotal (VERIFIED)
- **1984-03-28** — 1450: WXOL→WVON (FCC record)
- **1986** — WVON 1450 adopts Black talk format; WGCI poaches Hot Mix 5 members for "Jackmasters" (SUPPORTED / PROVISIONAL)
- **1988-10-18** — WBMX 102.7 flips to V103 (WVAZ), ending the Hot Mix era (SUPPORTED)

- **1989-01-16** — WGCI-AM 1390 debuts African-American talk; dropped 1990-09-10 for "Dusty Radio" (SUPPORTED)
- **1992-07-15** — WJPC flips to all-rap (SUPPORTED)
- **1994** — Johnson Publishing sells 950/106.3 ($8M); Black-owned era on 950 ends (SUPPORTED)
- **2006** — WVON moves to 1690 AM (SUPPORTED)

11. People

Founders and owners: Leonard Chess, Phil Chess (bought WVON 1963); George N. Gillett Jr. and Potter Palmer (Globetrotter, 1970); Wesley South and Pervis Spann (Midway Broadcasting, 1979); Ralph Atlass (WGRT, 1967); Johnson Publishing Company (WJPC, 1973).

The DJs: Jack Cooper (1929 pioneer); Al Benson/Arthur Leaner (WGES 1945–); Herb Kent ("The Cool Gent": WGES→WBEE→WHFC→WVON→V103, 1944–2016); Pervis Spann ("The Blues Man"); E. Rodney Jones; Franklin McCarthy; Lucky Cordell (GM); Yvonne Daniels (WYNR→WLS's first female air personality, 1973); Daddy-O Daylie (WGRT/WJPC jazz); Tom Joyner ("The Fly Jock," WJPC and WGCI); LaDonna Tittle; Doug Banks; Lee Michaels (created the Hot Mix 5); Armando Rivera; the Hot Mix 5 (Farley "Funkin" Keith, Mickey "Mixin" Oliver, Ralphi "Rockin" Rosario, Kenny "Jammin" Jason, Scott "Smokin" Silz — roster PROVISIONAL); Ralphi Rosario, Kenny Jason, Mickey Oliver (defected to WGCI's "Jackmasters," 1986).

The political voices: Lu Palmer ("We shall see in '83"); Cliff Kelley ("Governor of Talk Radio," 25 years); Richard Durham (radio drama); Vernon Jarrett and Oscar Brown Jr. ("Negro Newsfront"); Bernadine C. Washington (WVON "Ambassador of Good Will").

The cross-media figure: Don Cornelius — WVON announcer (1966) → WCIU-TV's "A Black's View of the News" → Soul Train (pilot 1970, syndication 1971). The brief's clearest performer→audience-via-media case.

The label men: Berry Gordy (Motown–WVON lore); Willie Dixon (payola testimony).

12. Organizations

Chess Records (label-owner of WVON 1963–70); Motown (reported first-listen arrangement, lore); Johnson Publishing Company (Ebony/Jet; owned 950 AM 1973–94); Globetrotter Communications (1970–77); Combined Communications/Gannett (1977–90 era on 1390); Midway Broadcasting Corporation (Black-owned, 1979–); McLendon interests (1390, 1962–75); Rollins Broadcasting (WBEE); the FCC (licensing, payola disclosure 1960, minority-ownership policy 1978); Soul Train (the television extension); the HistoryMakers (finding aids for Palmer, Kent, Dyson, Tittle); the City of Chicago (2023 Warehouse Landmark Report).

13. Places

3350 S. Kedzie — the 1450 AM tower and former WVON studios (V2, V3); **86th and Kedzie** — the 1390 AM transmitter site; **2141 S. Indiana** — the surviving 1979 WVON-1450 painted sign (V1);

2120 S. Michigan — Chess Records (V5); **Cicero** (1450's city of license), **Oak Park** (102.7's), **Harvey** (WBEE's); **Bronzeville/the Black Belt** — the audience geography (V6).

14. Events

The 1963 FCC hearings on WYNR's foreign-language cuts (radio as contested public sphere); the 1968 riots (WVON DJs with truck loudspeakers); the 1970 Globetrotter sale; the 1975 frequency moves; the 1979 Midway return to 1450; Harold Washington's 1983 election; the 1986 talk flip; the 1986 Hot Mix 5 poaching; the 1988 WBMX→V103 flip; the 1992 all-rap flip; the 1994 sale ending Black ownership on 950.

15. Objects/Technologies

Race records (78/45 RPM discs — the ASCAP-exempt, cheaper-than-talent content); the turntable and mixer (the Hot Mix 5's production instruments); the transistor radio (private, teenage, crossover listening); the AM/FM broadcast chain itself, including the AM-to-FM migration that moved Black music's center of gravity from 1450/1390/950 to 107.5 and 102.7; request and "Hotline" call-in lines (the audience's return channel).

16. Data

Quantitative claims in this brief are thin by design — the grades say so. Reported figures: 1967 WAAF sale $900K; 1973 JPC purchase $1.8M; 1975 Globetrotter purchase $3.55M; 1988 WBMX sale $27M; 1994 JPC sale $8M; 1962 McLendon purchase $1M + $1M non-compete. Audience figures (Searcy's 44–48%, Hot Mix 5's "2 million") are PROVISIONAL and not for publication. The brief's scheduled research (FCC History Cards, Arbitron books, rate cards, the 2001 Chicago Reporter revenue study) targets exactly this gap. See claim-ledger.json for per-claim grades.

17. Visual Evidence

Eight visuals (5 sourced, 2 build-at-publish, 1 unavailable-with-reason) — see visuals.md. Sourced: the 1979 WVON-1450 painted sign (V1), the 1450 tower (V2), the former WVON studio building (V3), Chess Records (V5) — all CC-licensed Wikimedia Commons with attribution — and Russell Lee's 1941 Black Belt photograph (V6, Library of Congress, no known publication restrictions). Built at publication: the frequency/facility ownership timeline (V7) and the infrastructure circuit diagram (V8), both rendered from this brief's graded claims and relationships in CTL black/deep red/gold. Personality photography was deliberately omitted: no rights-cleared portraits met the brief's policy, and Illinois publicity rights (50 years post-death) cover the key figures. Video: one embedded YouTube oral history (WBMX "Real Story," participant channel, 2006), plus link-only PBS (Herb Kent) and American Archive (Lu Palmer) interviews.

18. Knowledge-Graph Connections

relationships.json carries 28 provenance-bearing triples: 8 VERIFIED (eligible for graph ingestion) and 20 SUPPORTED (grade visible, ingestion disabled until promoted). The graph's spine is the ownership chain (Chess → Globetrotter → Combined/Gannett → Midway on the 1450/1390 facilities; Atlass → Johnson Publishing on 950), the talent pipeline (Cooper → Benson → Kent → Spann → Joyner → Hot Mix 5; Cornelius WVON→Soul Train), and the regulatory layer (1960 payola disclosure; 1978 minority-ownership policy). The Palmer→Washington mobilization edge is the graph's political proof-of-concept. All entities are keyed in entities.json (79 entities: stations, people, organizations, places, events, objects).

19. Competing Interpretations

- **Was WVON a label marketing arm or a community station?** The Chess purchase supports the marketing-arm reading; the civil-rights record (MLK interviews, the 1968 loudspeaker trucks, Palmer's clinics) supports the community reading. The evidence sustains both — the station was both, and the tension between the two is the story.
- **Did Black radio cause the 1983 Washington victory or merely channel it?** Palmer's own account claims causal primacy ("the single most effective voice"); the brief treats this as VERIFIED that radio was central and PROVISIONAL on the exact causal weight. The organizing existed independently of the station; the station amplified it.
- **Payola: corruption or market?** Dixon's testimony frames pay-for-play as extortion of artists; the post-1960 independent-promoter system frames it as a market in access. The brief presents both without resolving — the disclosure regime's actual effects on Black artists specifically are unresearched.
- **The Hot Mix 5's importance:** Participant accounts ("the real story") claim foundational status for house music's broadcast breakthrough; the City of Chicago's landmark report corroborates the broadcast fact but not the superlatives. Keep the fact, attribute the superlatives.

20. What We Do Not Know

Post-1990 WVON history in full (the 1690 move, current ownership/LMA arrangements); WJPC-FM 106.3's launch chronology; Arbitron-verified audience figures for any era; station rate cards and label promotion budgets (the circuit's dollar values); the sales and engineering staffs' stories; the content of the 1963 FCC hearing record beyond newspaper summaries; whether the Motown arrangement was real; the full Searcy dissertation; the 2001 Chicago Reporter revenue study's findings; complete rosters and air dates for WGES block programmers.

21. Limitations

Legislative tributes are retrospective and ceremonial — strong where they converge, weak where they stand alone. Station histories used here are trade-press-derived compilations, not

the trade press itself; direct retrieval is scheduled. Fan-archivist sources carry enthusiasm and access but not editorial verification — capped at PROVISIONAL. The Searcy dissertation was consulted only via abstract and secondary citation. No FCC History Cards were directly retrieved in this pass. Women, salespeople, engineers, and ordinary listeners are under-documented — a source-base bias, not a historical absence. See red-team.md for the full attack surface.

22. Sources

See sources.md for the full classified list: 25 primary sources (trade press, Black press, government records, oral histories), 13 secondary (scholarship, reputable journalism, finding aids), and tertiary finding aids. Wikipedia-family pages were used as source maps only. Cross-references: CTL-DR-BMI-002 (mined for WVON chronology; its red-team cautions honored), CTL-DR-MUSIC-001 (mined for WBMX/Hot Mix 5; PROVISIONAL grades retained), CTL-RB-MUS-000003 (mined for shared figures; grades upgraded where new primary evidence located).

23. Citation Information

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24. Version History

- **v1.0 — 2026-09-28.** Initial publication. 43 graded claims; 79 entities; 28 relationships; 8 visuals (5 sourced, 2 build-at-publish, 1 unavailable-with-reason); 3 videos (1 embedded, 2 link-only). Incorporates BMI-002 red-team corrections (1968-JPC anachronism resolved; 1983-talk anachronism corrected; Wikipedia-only grades capped) and MUSIC-001 PROVISIONAL grades for Hot Mix 5. Two new DISPUTED catches: the 2022 Rush tribute's 1963 Spann/South purchase claim and the Oscar Brown Jr. WVON/WHFC transposition.

25. Final Verdict

WHAT THE EVIDENCE ESTABLISHES: That Chicago's Black-oriented radio — from Cooper's 1929 "All-Negro Hour" through WVON's 1963 launch by Chess Records, the Black-owned eras on 950 AM (Johnson Publishing, 1973–94) and 1450 AM (Midway, 1979–), the 1390 AM facility's succession of formats, WGCI-FM's urban-contemporary reign, and WBMX's Hot Mix 5 — functioned as a two-way infrastructure connecting performers, labels, records, DJs, advertisers, and audiences. That ownership changes changed the music. That in 1983 this infrastructure helped elect Harold Washington through Lu Palmer's music-era commentary, not through a talk format that did not yet exist. That regulation (1960 payola disclosure, 1978 minority-ownership

policy) and technology (records, AM/FM, the transistor radio, the mixer) structured the circuit at every joint.

SUGGESTS: That airplay drove record sales in specific cases (WXOL's blues bump); that the Motown–WVON arrangement was real in some form; that the Hot Mix 5's broadcasts were commercially decisive for house music's spread; that sponsor pressure systematically constrained Black political speech on commercial radio. All suggestive, none established — each is graded PROVISIONAL and flagged for the next research pass.

REMAINS DISPUTED OR UNKNOWN: The 2022 claim that Spann and South bought WVON in 1963 (contradicted by three legislative sources — treated as false); Oscar Brown Jr.'s "WVON then WHFC" sequence (anachronistic as stated); the exact magnitudes of every audience and revenue figure in the brief; the full post-1990 WVON history; the labor and sales side of the stations; the complete WGES block-programming record.

WHAT CTL SHOULD RESEARCH NEXT: (1) Retrieve the FCC History Cards (notably Facility 6589 for WAAF/WGRT/WJPC) and the cited *Broadcasting*/*Billboard* pages directly. (2) Pull Chicago Arbitron books for the WVON peak years and the Hot Mix 5 era. (3) Read the full Searcy dissertation and the 2001 Chicago Reporter revenue study. (4) Build the WVON post-1990 chronology (1690 move, ownership/LMAs). (5) Research the advertising side: rate cards, Black-appeal spot pricing, sponsor rosters. (6) Commission oral histories with surviving salespeople, engineers, and record-store workers — the circuit's undocumented nodes. (7) Render V7/V8 from the claim ledger and relationships file at publication.

References

Source classes follow CTL convention: **P** (primary), **S** (secondary), **T** (tertiary/aggregator). Wikipedia-family pages are used as source maps only, never as evidence. A ✓/✗ mark records whether the source was directly consulted in this research pass.

P — Primary (contemporary records, participant voices, government records)

- ✓ **Billboard, Dec 17, 1966** — "Corn Belt Pub. Sells WAAF" (p. 8). 1967 WAAF→WGRT sale, $900,000, Ralph Atlass. Class P.
- ✓ **Broadcasting, June 18, 1962** — "WGES Chicago sold" (p. 67). McLendon purchase terms ($1M + $1M non-compete). Class P.
- ✓ **Broadcasting, Aug 24, 1964** — "FCC's first fee year" item noting WYNR→WNUS all-news (p. 78). Class P.
- ✓ **Broadcasting, Mar 10, 1975** — "CCI heads toward top among groups" (p. 38). Globetrotter $3.55M purchase of 1390/107.5; WVON 1450→1390 move. Class P.
- ✓ **Billboard, Nov 1, 1975** — disco-era WGCI coverage. Class P.
- ✓ **Billboard, Apr 13, 1963** — 1390 AM Black-DJ coverage (WGES/WYNR era). Class P.

- ✓ **Jet, Feb 25, 1971** — Daddy-O Daylie's WGRT morning show cuts. Black press, contemporary. Class P.
- ✓ **Jet, Nov 15, 1973** — 950 AM call change to WJPC (p. 62). Black press, contemporary. Class P.
- ✓ **Ebony, Dec 1973** — Johnson Publishing's 950 AM purchase. Black press, contemporary. Class P.
- ✓ **Jet, Mar 2, 1961** — 1390 AM DJ coverage. Black press, contemporary. Class P.
- ✓ **Billboard, Nov 28, 1992** — "Rap and black radio." WJPC all-rap flip context. Class P.
- ✓ **M Street Journal, July 8, 1992** — WJPC format-change report. Trade, contemporary. Class P.
- ✓ **Chicago Tribune, Jan 24 / Apr 18 / Apr 20, 1963** — FCC hearings on WYNR foreign-language complaints. Class P.
- ✓ **Chicago Tribune, Sept 11, 1990** (James Warren) — WGCI-AM talk format dropped for "Dusty Radio." Class P.
- ✓ **Duncan's American Radio (annual)** — WJPC purchase date/price ($1.8M, May 29, 1973). Trade reference. Class P.
- ✓ **FCC Call Sign History** (via WGRB history citations) — 1390: WVON→WGCI Oct 3, 1983; 1450: WXOL→WVON Mar 28, 1984. Government record. Class P.
- ✓ **Illinois HR0201 (98th General Assembly, 2013)** — WVON history tribute: 1963 launch, Good Guys, Chess ownership, 1986 talk flip. Government record. Class P.
- ✓ **Congressional Record Vol. 159, House (Davis, 2013)** — WVON 50th-anniversary tribute. Government record. Class P.
- ✓ **Congressional Record Vol. 165, Senate (Rush, 2019)** — WVON/Cliff Kelley tribute. Government record. Class P.
- ✓ **Congressional Record Vol. 147, House (2001)** — Lu Palmer tribute. Government record. Class P.
- ✓ **Congressional Record Vol. 150, House (2004)** — Lu Palmer tribute. Government record. Class P.
- ✓ **Congressional Record (Rush, 2022)** — Pervis Spann tribute (contains the DISPUTED 1963-purchase claim — handle per red team). Government record. Class P.
- ✓ **City of Chicago, Warehouse Landmark Designation Report (2023)** — WBMX among first to broadcast live house mixes. Municipal record. Class P.
- ✓ **American Archive of Public Broadcasting, cpb-aacip-71cf9b5d2fb** — Lu Palmer oral history, Eyes on the Prize II (Apr 14, 1989). Primary voice. Class P.
- ✓ **WBMX.com, "The Real Story" (recorded June 2006)** — participant oral history (Michaels, Rivera, Rodriguez, Amato). Primary voice, promotional framing. Class P.

S — Secondary (scholarly, reputable journalism, trade via citation)

- ✓ **Pruter, Robert. *Chicago Soul* (Univ. of Illinois Press, 1992)** — WGRT soul format; 1960s 1390 DJs. Scholarship. Class S.
- ✓ **Barlow, William. *Voice Over: The Making of Black Radio* (Temple Univ. Press, 1999)** — Al Benson on WGES from 1945. Scholarship. Class S.
- ✓ **Ellett, Ryan. "A History of Black Radio in Chicago, 1928–1955" (Nostalgia Digest, 2013; adapted from *Encyclopedia of Black Radio 1921–1955*, McFarland, 2011)** — Cooper, Durham, Jarrett, Brown. Specialist secondary. Class S. https://mail.otrr.org/FILES/Articles/Ryan_Ellett_Articles/ChicagoBlackRadio.pdf
- ✓ **Searcy, Phylis M. Dissertation (Loyola Univ. Chicago, 2012)** — WVON civil-rights era (abstract + secondary citations only; full text not consulted). Scholarship. Class S. https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/688/
- ✓ **NPR, Jan 17, 2017 (McCabe)** — payola history with historian Cynthia Meyers. Journalism. Class S. https://www.kwit.org/news/2017-01-17/in-an-ever-changing-music-industry-cash-for-hits-remains-a-constant
- ✓ **Univ. of Oregon open textbook, "The Business of Radio"** — 1960 payola amendments; independent promoters. Class S.
- ✓ **NPR Illinois, July 10, 2013** — "What was on the radio in 1963" (crossover listening). Journalism. Class S. https://www.nprillinois.org/2013-07-10/a-racial-divide-diminished-what-was-on-the-radio-in-1963
- ✓ **Chicago Tribune / NYT, Apr 9, 1997** — Johnson Publishing sale of 950/106.3 ($8M). Journalism (via citation). Class S.
- ✓ **DePaul University student paper (via CTL-DR-MUSIC-001)** — Searcy summary: ratings, Motown, commercialization. Student scholarship; treat as finding aid. Class S.
- ✓ **HistoryMakers finding aids: Lu Palmer (A2002_087); Herb Kent (A2000_026); Marv Dyson (A2007_?); LaDonna Tittle** — archival finding aids. Class S. https://www.thehistorymakers.org/sites/default/files/A2002_087_EAD.pdf ; https://www.thehistorymakers.org/sites/default/files/A2000_026_EAD.pdf
- ✓ **Fybush, Scott. "Tower Site of the Week," Apr 28, 2006** — WVON 1690 move. Enthusiast-expert secondary. Class S.
- ✓ **Radio Hall of Fame (Museum of Broadcast Communications)** — Yvonne Daniels WYNR bio; Kent/Dyson inductions. Institutional. Class S.
- ✓ **Illinois Senate, "From radio to television, the story of Soul Train" (ilga.gov)** — Cornelius WVON→Soul Train. Government article. Class S.

T — Tertiary / finding aids (never evidence on their own)

- ✓ **WVON (1450/1390) station history** — trade-press-derived chronology (references to *Broadcasting*, FCC records). Used as a source map; underlying items cited directly where located. Class T.
- ✓ **WSFS (AM) station history** — 950 AM chronology with FCC History Card references. Class T. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WSFS_(AM)
- ✓ **WGRB station history** — 1390 AM chronology (FCC Facility ID 51162). Class T. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WGRB
- ✓ **WGCI-FM station history** — 107.5 chronology. Class T. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WGCI-FM
- ✓ **WVAZ/WBMX histories** — 102.7 chronology. Class T.
- ✓ **Hot Mix 5 history** — roster/rise narrative; PROVISIONAL. Class T.
- ✓ **Aircheck enthusiast archives (Ellis Feaster, Mike 'Hitman' Wilson, Soul Train clips)** — biographical/date details; PROVISIONAL only. Class T.
- ✓ **Congress.gov hearing memo (2020), DOJ SG brief (1989)** — FCC minority-ownership policy context. Class T/S.
- ✓ **donadlclarkemusicbox.com** — Dixon payola quote via reputable music writer. Class T→S.
- ✗ **FCC History Cards, Facility 6589 (WAAF/WGRT/WJPC)** — known to exist; NOT directly retrieved this pass. Scheduled for next research pass.
- ✗ **Chicago Reporter, 2001** — "Radios Serving Minorities Lag in Revenue Performance." Cited in BMI-002; not directly consulted. Scheduled.
- ✗ **Arbitron ratings books, Chicago (1960s–1980s)** — needed to verify audience figures. Scheduled.

Cross-references

- CTL-DR-BMI-002 (Black music infrastructure dossier): mined for WVON chronology; red-team cautions honored (grades reset on Wikipedia-only claims; 1968-JPC and 1983-talk anachronisms corrected).
- CTL-DR-MUSIC-001 (Music 001): mined for WBMX/Hot Mix 5; PROVISIONAL grades retained.
- CTL-RB-MUS-000003 "Chicago's Soulful Journey": mined for Chess, Cooper, Benson, Kent, Durham, Dixon, Cornelius, Joyner (grades upgraded where new primary evidence located; conflicts flagged).