**C U L T U R E T E C H L E N S**

*Culture, Clearly Seen.*

B L A C K C U L T U R A L I N T E L L I G E N C E

C U L T U R E T E C H L E N S R E S E A R C H R E P O R T · C T L - R D - M E D I A - 0 0 0 0 0 1

# WVON

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**CULTURETECHLENS** · *Culture, Clearly Seen.* · Black Cultural Intelligence **Dossier ID:** CTL-RD-MEDIA-000001 · **Status:** Research · **Version:** 1.0 (2026-09-28) **Evidence file:** CTL-EF-MEDIA-000001 (`evidence-file.md`) **Canonical entity:** `canon-wvon` (per `research/_audit/duplicates.json`)

## 01 · Identity

**Canonical name:** WVON (1450 AM / 1390 AM / 1450 AM / 1690 AM — call sign continuous since 1963) **Dossier ID:** CTL-RD-MEDIA-000001 **Entity type:** Radio station (AM broadcast; Black-oriented music 1963–1986; Black-oriented talk 1986–present) **One-sentence identification:** WVON is Chicago's heritage Black radio station — launched April 1, 1963 by Chess Records owners Leonard and Phil Chess as "The Voice of the Negro," now "The Voice of the Nation," a Black-owned talk station operated by Midway Broadcasting Corporation on 1690 AM. **Disambiguation:** This dossier covers the WVON *call sign and station lineage* across its frequency migrations (1450 → 1390 → 1450 → 1690). It is not the 1390 AM facility now known as WGCI (a separate FCC facility whose calls were WVON 1975–1983), nor the 1450 AM facility's other time-share occupant WCEV. Facility-vs.-station distinction is documented in §05 and §26. Not to be confused with WJPC (`canon-wjpc`) or WGCI (`canon-wgci`), separate Chicago Black-radio entities.

## 02 · Executive Profile

WVON is the longest-running institutional voice in Chicago Black radio: a single call-sign lineage spanning 1963 to the present, through four ownership eras and three frequency moves. CTL establishes, from primary and strong secondary evidence, the complete ownership/frequency timeline: WHFC (1926–1963) → Chess brothers purchase and WVON launch (April 1, 1963) → Globetrotter Communications (sale consummated 1970, $9M) → 1450-to-1390 move (February 5,

1975) → Combined Communications/Gannett (1977–78) → Midway Broadcasting's 1450 license (WXOL, August 1979) → WVON calls restored to 1450 (March 28, 1984) → all-talk format (March 1986) → 1690 AM via LMA with Clear Channel/iHeartMedia (September 18, 2006). CTL's strongest findings: (1) the Chess-era station (1963–1969) functioned as both a Chess Records marketing engine and a civil-rights communications hub — the dual role is the subject of a 2012 Loyola PhD dissertation; (2) the widely repeated claim that WVON's *talk format* powered Harold Washington's 1983 mayoral campaign is temporally impossible and REFUTED — the music-era station backed Washington via journalist Lu Palmer's organizing, while the talk format (March 1986) served the 1987 reelection and later campaigns; (3) the station's Black ownership was restored in 1979 when former WVON personalities Pervis Spann and Wesley South formed Midway Broadcasting, and continues today under Spann's daughter Melody Spann Cooper. What remains uncertain: the exact date the "Voice of the Negro" branding became "Voice of the Nation"; the WNUS-AM-FM purchase price ($4.45M vs. $3.55M in competing sources); and advertiser-level economics of the Chess era, which survive only in fragmentary trade-press traces.

## 03 · Significance

- **CLAIM (VERIFIED):** WVON is the only Chicago Black radio station with a continuous call-sign lineage from the civil-rights era to the present, making it the primary broadcast witness to Black Chicago's post-1963 political and cultural history.
- **CLAIM (VERIFIED):** During the Chess era (1963–1969), WVON fused commercial R&B broadcasting with civil-rights journalism — interviewing movement leaders, broadcasting Operation Breadbasket meetings, and deploying DJs with loudspeaker trucks to calm the West Side after King's assassination — a dual commercial/movement function documented in a dedicated scholarly dissertation (Searcy 2012).
- **CLAIM (VERIFIED):** The March 1986 conversion to all-talk created Chicago's first Black talk-radio format, a programming innovation competitors (notably Gannett's WGCI-AM in January 1989) then imitated.
- **CLAIM (SUPPORTED):** WVON's rotation demonstrably moved national record markets in the 1960s — Motown routed premieres through the station first, and its airplay influenced other markets' programming.
- **CLAIM (VERIFIED):** The station's 1979 return to Black ownership (Midway Broadcasting) and its survival as a Black-owned talk outlet into the 2020s make it a rare case of Black media ownership persistence through the consolidation era.
- Without WVON, the record of how Black Chicago *heard itself* — the music, the movement news, the electoral mobilization — would rest almost entirely on print.

## 04 · Names/Aliases

| Name | Source | Date range | Grade |
|---|---|---|---|
| WHFC | Ghrist 1996; Broadcasting 1948 | 1926–1963 | VERIFIED |
| WVON — "The Voice of the Negro" | Congressional Record (Davis 2013); HR0201; Rush 2019 | 1963–unknown | VERIFIED (original branding) |
| WVON — "The Voice of the Nation" | Rush 2019; station's own materials (2014) | unknown–present | VERIFIED (current); rename date UNRESOLVED |
| "The Talk of Chicago" | Station branding (2014 press release) | 2010s–present | SUPPORTED |
| "The Good Guys" | Congressional Record (Davis 2013); Reich 2013 | 1963–c.1970s (on-air team name) | VERIFIED |
| WXOL (1450 AM, Midway's interim calls) | FCC history cards; Billboard 1979 | 1979–1984 | VERIFIED |
| Misspelling "McKee Fitghugh" | Congressional Record (Davis 2013) as printed; station histories print "McKee Fitzhugh" | — | Noted variant; "Fitzhugh" preferred |

## 05 · Dates

- **1926** — WHFC begins broadcasting (Hotel Flanders, Chicago; Richard W. Hoffman owner) — SUPPORTED (Ghrist 1996; Broadcasting 1948).
- **1941** — WHFC moves to 1450 kHz (NARBA) — SUPPORTED (Ghrist 1996).
- **Early 1950s** — WHFC studios/transmitter move to 3350 S. Kedzie, South Lawndale — SUPPORTED (Ghrist 1996).
- **1963-04-01** — WVON debuts on 1450 AM after Chess brothers' purchase of WHFC — VERIFIED (Billboard 1963-04-13 contemporary; Davis 2013; Rush 2019; HR0201; Reich 2013).
- **1969-10** — Leonard Chess dies — VERIFIED (multiple obituaries/histories; BMI-002).
- **1970** — Chess family sale to Globetrotter Communications consummated ($9M) — VERIFIED (Billboard 1969-12-13; Broadcasting 1970-09-28).
- **1975-02-05 15:30** — WVON moves 1450 → 1390 (ex-WNUS, 5,000 watts) — VERIFIED (Chicago Tribune, Gary Deeb, 1975-02-06).
- **1976-08-24** — WFMT begins interim simulcast on dormant 1450 — SUPPORTED (Billboard 1976-09-11).
- **1977** — Combined Communications purchases Globetrotter — VERIFIED (Billboard 1977-05-14).
- **1978** — Combined merges with Gannett — VERIFIED (Washington Post 1978-05-09).

- **1979-08** — WXOL (Midway Broadcasting) premieres on 1450 — VERIFIED (Davis 2013; Billboard 1979-08-04; FCC cards).
- **1979-10** — WXOL and WCEV both on air, sharing 1450 (time-share) — VERIFIED (FCC history cards; Broadcasting & Cable Yearbook 1981).
- **1983** — Gannett changes 1390 calls WVON → WGCI — SUPPORTED (station histories; corroborated by In These Times 1989 noting WGCI-AM as the ex-WVON facility).
- **1984-03-28** — WVON calls return to 1450 (Midway) — SUPPORTED (FCC history cards via station histories).
- **1986-03** — WVON adopts Black-oriented all-talk format — VERIFIED (GM Hoyett Owens, quoted in In These Times 1989-03-15: "changing to a talk format in March '86"; HR0201; Benton 2007; Reich 2013).
- **2006-09-18** — WVON calls + programming move to 1690 AM (LMA with Clear Channel) — VERIFIED (station histories; FCC record of WRLL→WVON call change).
- **2007** — Studios move 3350 S. Kedzie → Soft Sheen Building, 87th St., Chatham — SUPPORTED.
- **2018 (late)** — Studios move to South Loop — SUPPORTED (Chicago Crusader 2018-10-03).
- **2022-03-14** — Pervis Spann dies — VERIFIED (Final Call 2022-04-05; Congressional Record, Rush 2022-03-24).

**Contested/ambiguous:** WNUS-AM-FM purchase price (1975): $4,450,000 (Tribune) vs. $3,550,000 (station histories) — DISPUTED, both recorded. "Voice of the Nation" rename date — UNRESOLVED.

## 06 · Geography

- **Hotel Flanders, Chicago** — WHFC origin site, 1926 (SUPPORTED; exact street address not documented in sources consulted).
- **Cermak Rd., Cicero, IL** — WHFC studios/transmitter after city-of-license change to Cicero (SUPPORTED; exact address not documented).
- **3350 S. Kedzie Ave., Chicago (South Lawndale)** — WHFC/WVON/WXOL studios and 317-foot tower site from early 1950s to 2007; "longtime home" of WVON (VERIFIED — Ghrist 1996; FCC history cards; station histories). Tower shared by WXOL/WCEV from 1979.
- **2141 S. Indiana Ave., Chicago** — WVON 1450 sign photographed above/behind Lakeside Coffee Shop, March 1979 (SUPPORTED — dated press photograph described in station history).
- **87th Street, Chatham (former Soft Sheen Products Building)** — WVON studios 2007–2018 (SUPPORTED; exact street number not documented).
- **South Loop, Chicago** — WVON studios late 2018–present (SUPPORTED — Chicago Crusader 2018; exact address not published).
- **87th & Kedzie, Ashburn, Chicago** — 1690 AM transmitter site (SUPPORTED — FCC coordinates 41.7372556°N, 87.7011611°W).

- **Berwyn, IL** — city of license, 1690 AM facility (VERIFIED — FCC).
- **Cicero, IL** — city of license, 1450 AM facility (VERIFIED — FCC/legislative sources).
- Community-area note: South Lawndale (studios/tower) and Chatham, Ashburn, South Loop are distinct community areas — not collapsed.

## 07 · Biography/History

WVON's lineage begins as **WHFC**, a 1926 Chicago station owned by Richard W. Hoffman that by the 1940s–1960s aired ethnic and African-American programming from Cicero-licensed 1450 AM, moving its studios and transmitter to 3350 S. Kedzie in the early 1950s (Ghrist 1996; Broadcasting 1948) [SUPPORTED]. In early 1963 the Chess brothers — Leonard and Phil Chess, owners of Chess Records — bought WHFC (with FM sister WEHS) for a reported $1 million (Broadcasting 1963-02-18; Billboard 1963-04-13) [VERIFIED/SUPPORTED], seeking both a promotional outlet for the label and a station that could, in their phrase, galvanize Black Chicago (Rush 2019; station's own history) [SUPPORTED].

On **April 1, 1963**, WVON — "The Voice of the Negro" — debuted with the hand-picked "Good Guys": Franklin McCarthy, E. Rodney Jones, Herb Kent (retained from WHFC's staff), Wesley South, and Pervis Spann, under GM Lucky Cordell (Davis 2013; HR0201) [VERIFIED]. Playing R&B and soul, it was by early 1964 the second most-listened Chicago station in evening hours (Billboard 1964-03-28) [SUPPORTED]. The Chess era fused commerce and movement: the station marketed Chess and national R&B product — Motown's Berry Gordy routed every premiere through WVON first (Davis 2013; Danois 2013) [SUPPORTED] — while its news operation interviewed Martin Luther King Jr. and Elijah Muhammad, carried Jesse Jackson's call reporting King's assassination, and sent DJs out with loudspeaker trucks to plead for calm during the post-assassination riots (Davis 2013; Rush 2019) [SUPPORTED]. Loyola historian Jennifer Searcy's 2012 dissertation documents this dual function as the station's defining 1960s role [SUPPORTED].

Leonard Chess died in October 1969; the family sold WVON to **Globetrotter Communications** — George N. Gillett Jr. and Potter Palmer — for $9 million, consummated 1970 (Billboard 1969-12-13; Broadcasting 1970-09-28) [VERIFIED]. Globetrotter bought WNUS-AM-FM from the McLendon interests and on February 5, 1975 moved WVON from 1450 to the 5,000-watt 1390 signal (Tribune 1975-02-06) [VERIFIED]; the WNUS price is reported as $4,450,000 (Tribune) against $3,550,000 in later station histories [DISPUTED]. The 1450 frequency went dormant, then carried WFMT as interim operator from August 1976 (Billboard 1976-09-11) [SUPPORTED]. Under Globetrotter the station cut news and community programming from 1974 and fired the on-air staff in 1977 (DePaul/Ramsay paper, citing Searcy and Benton) [SUPPORTED]. Combined Communications bought Globetrotter in 1977 and merged with Gannett in 1978 (Billboard 1977-05-14; Washington Post 1978-05-09) [VERIFIED].

In 1979 two former WVON personalities, **Pervis Spann and Wesley South**, formed **Midway Broadcasting Corporation** and won the 1450 license; their **WXOL** premiered in August 1979 with a blues format, time-sharing 1450 with Migala Communications' ethnic WCEV from

October 1979, both transmitting from the old WVON tower at 3350 S. Kedzie (Davis 2013; Billboard 1979-08-04; FCC history cards; Broadcasting & Cable Yearbook 1981) [VERIFIED]. Gannett, meanwhile, changed the 1390 calls from WVON to WGCI in 1983; Midway reclaimed the heritage calls and on March 28, 1984 WVON returned to 1450 (FCC history cards; station histories) [SUPPORTED], with audience reportedly up 50% after the change [SUPPORTED, single source].

At co-owner Wesley South's urging, WVON dropped music for **all-talk in March 1986** — "changing to a talk format in March '86," per GM Hoyett Owens in a contemporary 1989 interview — creating Chicago's first Black talk-radio format (In These Times 1989-03-15; HR0201; Benton 2007) [VERIFIED]. The talk era's political function is precisely dated by the evidence: the *music-era* station had backed Harold Washington's 1983 campaign through journalist Lu Palmer's "Lou's Notebook" and his "We Shall See in '83" organizing (Davis 2013; HistoryMakers Palmer finding aid) [VERIFIED]; the *talk* format then served Washington's 1987 reelection, Carol Moseley Braun's Senate campaign, and Barack Obama's rise — Obama, as state senator, filled in for host Cliff Kelley in 2002 (In These Times 1989; Davis 2013; Reich 2013) [SUPPORTED]. The claim that the talk format elected Washington in 1983 is temporally impossible and REFUTED (see §27).

On September 18, 2006, WVON's calls and programming moved to **1690 AM** (Berwyn license, 10,000 watts day) under a local marketing agreement with Clear Channel (now iHeartMedia), which owns the facility; Midway Broadcasting operates the station (station histories; FCC call-change record) [VERIFIED]. Studios moved from 3350 S. Kedzie to Chatham's Soft Sheen building in 2007 and to the South Loop in late 2018 (Crusader 2018) [SUPPORTED]. Midway remains Black-owned under Chair/CEO **Melody Spann Cooper**, Pervis Spann's daughter, who began at WVON at age 15, became president/GM in 1994, and bought a controlling Midway interest in 1999 (HistoryMakers bio; Gift of Hope; House testimony 2024) [VERIFIED]. The station continues as "The Voice of the Nation" — when that rebrand replaced "Voice of the Negro" is undocumented [UNRESOLVED].

## 08 · Chronology

- 1926 — WHFC begins, Hotel Flanders, Chicago (Hoffman) — SUPPORTED — Ghrist 1996
- 1941 — WHFC to 1450 kHz (NARBA) — SUPPORTED — Ghrist 1996
- Early 1950s — WHFC studios/transmitter to 3350 S. Kedzie — SUPPORTED — Ghrist 1996
- 1963-02-18 — Broadcasting reports WHFC sale to Chess brothers ("Radio Stations Hot Item in Sales Market") — SUPPORTED — Broadcasting (contemporary)
- 1963-04-01 — WVON debuts on 1450, "Voice of the Negro," Good Guys lineup — VERIFIED — Billboard 1963-04-13; Davis 2013; HR0201; Reich 2013
- 1964-03 (early) — WVON 2nd most-listened Chicago station, evenings — SUPPORTED — Billboard 1964-03-28

- 1968 — Playlist expands to compatible white artists — SUPPORTED — Billboard 1968-06-22; 1969-08-23
- 1968-04-04 — Jesse Jackson calls WVON to report MLK assassination; DJs do loudspeaker-truck calm appeals — SUPPORTED — Davis 2013; Rush 2019
- 1969-10 — Leonard Chess dies — VERIFIED — obituaries/histories
- 1969-12-13 — Billboard reports WVON to be sold for $9M — VERIFIED — Billboard (contemporary)
- 1970 — Sale to Globetrotter Communications consummated — VERIFIED — Broadcasting 1970-09-28
- 1974 — News/community programming cuts begin — SUPPORTED — Tribune Magazine 1979-03-04
- 1975-02-05 15:30 — WVON 1450 → 1390 (ex-WNUS) — VERIFIED — Chicago Tribune 1975-02-06
- 1976-08-24 — WFMT interim simulcast on 1450 — SUPPORTED — Billboard 1976-09-11
- 1977 — On-air staff fired (Globetrotter) — SUPPORTED — Searcy/Benton via DePaul paper
- 1977 — Combined Communications buys Globetrotter — VERIFIED — Billboard 1977-05-14
- 1978 — Combined merges with Gannett — VERIFIED — Washington Post 1978-05-09
- 1979-03 — Tribune: "dark side of the medium" on WVON's decline — SUPPORTED — Chicago Tribune Magazine 1979-03-04
- 1979-08 — WXOL premieres on 1450 (Midway) — VERIFIED — Davis 2013; Billboard 1979-08-04
- 1979-10 — WXOL/WCEV time-share both on air, 3350 S. Kedzie tower — VERIFIED — FCC history cards
- 1979-11-03 — Billboard: WXOL blues format lifts Chicago blues record sales — SUPPORTED — Billboard
- 1982 — Yvonne Daniels joins WVON as morning-drive host — SUPPORTED — Fong-Torres 2001
- 1983 — Gannett changes 1390 WVON → WGCI — SUPPORTED — station histories
- 1983 — WVON (music era) backs Harold Washington mayoral campaign via Lu Palmer — VERIFIED — HistoryMakers Palmer aid; Davis 2013
- 1984-03-28 — WVON calls return to 1450 — SUPPORTED — FCC history cards
- 1986-03 — WVON adopts all-talk format — VERIFIED — In These Times 1989 (Owens quote); HR0201
- 1989-01 — WGCI-AM (Gannett, ex-WVON 1390) switches to Black talk to compete — SUPPORTED — In These Times 1989
- 1994 — Melody Spann Cooper becomes WVON president/GM — SUPPORTED — HistoryMakers bio

- 1999 — Spann Cooper buys controlling Midway interest; named board chair — SUPPORTED — HistoryMakers bio
- 2002 — State Sen. Barack Obama fills in for Cliff Kelley — SUPPORTED — Reich 2013
- 2005-10–2008-10 — Roland Martin hosts on WVON — SUPPORTED — station histories
- 2006-09-18 — WVON moves to 1690 AM (LMA, Clear Channel) — VERIFIED — station histories; FCC
- 2007 — Studios to 87th St., Chatham — SUPPORTED — station histories
- 2013-04-05/07 — 50th anniversary "IMPACT 50" gala — SUPPORTED — HR0201
- 2018 (late) — Studios to South Loop — SUPPORTED — Chicago Crusader 2018-10-03
- 2019-05 — Todd Stroger joins as morning co-host — SUPPORTED — station histories
- 2020 (summer) — Stroger & Maze Jackson depart over Lightfoot-coverage dispute — SUPPORTED — station histories
- 2022-03-14 — Pervis Spann dies — VERIFIED — Final Call 2022-04-05; Rush tribute 2022-03-24
- 2024-04-30 — Melody Spann Cooper testifies before House subcommittee (AM radio) as Midway Chair/CEO — VERIFIED — docs.house.gov

## 09 · People

**Founders/owners:** - **Leonard Chess** (1917–1969) — co-purchaser of WHFC, co-founder of WVON; owner 1963–1969 — VERIFIED — Davis 2013; Rush 2019; Billboard 1963. - **Phil Chess** (1921–2016) — co-purchaser, co-founder; owner 1963–1969 — VERIFIED — same. - **George N. Gillett Jr.** — co-owner via Globetrotter Communications, 1970–1977 — VERIFIED — Billboard 1969; Broadcasting 1970. - **Potter Palmer** — co-owner via Globetrotter Communications, 1970–1977 — VERIFIED — same. - **Pervis Spann** (1932–2022) — "The Blues Man"; original Good Guy (1963); co-founder Midway Broadcasting (1979); staged 87-hour sleepless sit-in for MLK fundraising — VERIFIED (launch/midway) / SUPPORTED (sit-in) — Davis 2013; Rush 2022; Final Call 2022. - **Wesley South** — original Good Guy (1963); co-founder Midway Broadcasting (1979); urged 1986 talk-format switch — VERIFIED — Davis 2013; HR0201; In These Times 1989. - **Vernon Jarrett** (journalist) — named in Final Call obituary as joining Spann and South in the 1979 purchase group — SUPPORTED (single source; Wikipedia's station history names only Spann and South as Midway principals). - **Melody Spann Cooper** — daughter of Pervis Spann; WVON on-air from age 15 (1980), news director 1986, president/GM 1994, bought controlling Midway interest 1999, Chair/CEO present — VERIFIED — HistoryMakers bio; Gift of Hope; docs.house.gov 2024; IBA 2023.

**On-air personalities (documented tenures only):** - **Franklin McCarthy** — original Good Guy, 1963 launch — VERIFIED — Davis 2013; HR0201. - **E. Rodney Jones** — original Good Guy, 1963 launch — VERIFIED (lineup); "Mad Lad" nickname UNVERIFIABLE (see §27). - **Herb Kent** ("The Cool Gent"; 1928–2016) — retained from WHFC staff at 1963 launch; WVON 1963–1970; National Radio Hall of Fame 1995; mentored Don Cornelius — VERIFIED — HistoryMakers finding aid A2000_026; Pruter, *Chicago Soul*; National Radio Hall of Fame. - **Lucky Cordell** (Moses "Lucky"

Cordell) — general manager at launch — VERIFIED (role) — Davis 2013; HR0201. (Also listed among personalities in some sources.) - **Bernadine C. Washington** — "Ambassador of Good Will" — SUPPORTED — Davis 2013; station history. - **Later Good Guys/voices** (joined after launch; individual tenures not documented in sources consulted — listed as roster, not tenured): Ric Ricardo, Bill "Butterball" Crane, Ed "Nassau Daddy" Cook, Joe "Youngblood" Cobb, Roy Wood (newsman), Ed/Jim Maloney (news), Bill "Doc" Lee, Don Cornelius, Richard Pegue, Isabel Joseph Johnson, Cecil Hale, McKee Fitzhugh — SUPPORTED (roster) — Davis 2013; HR0201; Danois 2013. - **Don Cornelius** — WVON DJ before creating *Soul Train* (premiered 1971); Sid McCoy accompanied him — SUPPORTED — Danois 2013. - **Lu Palmer** (Lutrelle F. Palmer II; journalist, *Chicago Defender*, Black X-Press) — hosted "Lou's Notebook"/"Lu's Notebook" on WVON; spearheaded Harold Washington's 1983 campaign ("We Shall See in '83") — VERIFIED — Davis 2013; HistoryMakers finding aid A2002_087; In These Times 1989. - **Yvonne Daniels** — morning-drive host from 1982 — SUPPORTED — Fong-Torres 2001. - **Cliff Kelley** — "Governor of Talk Radio"; ~25 years as WVON host; former 20th Ward alderman (16 years) — SUPPORTED — Rush 2019 tribute; Obama filled in for him 2002 (Reich 2013). - **Roland Martin** — host, October 2005–October 2008 — SUPPORTED — station histories. - **Hoyett Owens** — general manager, 1980s (quoted on March 1986 talk switch) — SUPPORTED — In These Times 1989. - **Perry/Perri Small** — WVON producer, 1980s — SUPPORTED — In These Times 1989.

**Workers/ordinary people:** The record as consulted centers on star personalities; rank-and-file staff (engineers, e.g., young reporter/engineer Larry Langford named in Danois 2013) are thinly documented — see §28.

**Missing women (explicitly searched):** Isabel Joseph Johnson and Bernadine C. Washington appear on the launch-era roster; Yvonne Daniels (1982) is the first documented woman with a named daypart; Melody Spann Cooper is the central woman in the station's modern history. No sources consulted document additional women on the 1960s–70s air staff; the gap is recorded, not assumed.

## 10 · Organizations

- **Chess Records** (`canon-chess-records`) — owners' company; WVON served as its promotional outlet — SUPPORTED — Rush 2019; Searcy 2012.
- **Globetrotter Communications** — owner 1970–1977 — VERIFIED.
- **McLendon interests** (Gordon McLendon's group) — seller of WNUS-AM-FM (1975) — VERIFIED — Tribune 1975.
- **Combined Communications Corporation** — bought Globetrotter 1977 — VERIFIED.
- **Gannett Company** — absorbed Combined 1978; owner of 1390 (as WVON, then WGCI) 1978–1983 — VERIFIED.
- **Midway Broadcasting Corporation** — Black-owned; 1450 licensee from 1979; WVON operator 1984–present (via LMA on 1690 since 2006) — VERIFIED.
- **Migala Communications** — WCEV; 1450 time-share partner 1979– — VERIFIED — FCC cards.

- **Clear Channel Communications / iHeartMedia** — 1690 facility owner; LMA counterparty 2006–present — VERIFIED — station histories; FCC.
- **Motown Records** — Berry Gordy routed premieres to WVON first — SUPPORTED — Davis 2013; Danois 2013.
- **Operation PUSH / Rainbow PUSH** (`canon-operation-push`) — weekly Operation Breadbasket meetings broadcast on WVON — SUPPORTED — Final Call 2022.
- **Chicago Defender** (`canon-chicago-defender`) — Lu Palmer's paper; institutional neighbor in the Black information ecosystem (relationship: personnel overlap, not ownership).
- **Premiere Networks** — WVON affiliation (current) — SUPPORTED — station listing.

## 11 · Places

See §06. Key: 3350 S. Kedzie (studios/tower, early 1950s–2007); 87th St./Chatham Soft Sheen building (2007–2018); South Loop (2018–); 87th & Kedzie transmitter (1690); Berwyn (1690 license); Cicero (1450 license).

## 12 · Events

- **1963-04-01 — Launch.** WVON debuts on 1450 AM — VERIFIED.
- **1968-04-04/05 — King assassination response.** Jesse Jackson calls WVON to report the assassination; DJs take loudspeaker trucks to the West Side pleading for calm — SUPPORTED — Davis 2013; Rush 2019.
- **1975-02-05 — Frequency move.** WVON 1450 → 1390 at 3:30 p.m. — VERIFIED — Tribune 1975-02-06.
- **1979-08 — WXOL premiere.** Midway's blues-format station launches on 1450 — VERIFIED.
- **1983 — Washington campaign.** Music-era WVON backs Harold Washington via Lu Palmer — VERIFIED.
- **1984-03-28 — Calls restored.** WVON returns to 1450 — SUPPORTED — FCC cards.
- **1986-03 — Talk format.** Chicago's first Black talk format launches — VERIFIED.
- **2006-09-18 — 1690 move.** Calls/programming to 1690 via LMA — VERIFIED.
- **2013-04-05/07 — 50th anniversary "IMPACT 50" gala** — SUPPORTED — HR0201.
- **2020 (summer) — Stroger/Jackson departure** over Lightfoot-coverage restrictions — SUPPORTED — station histories. (Editorial-independence dispute; both sides: management's directive vs. hosts' resignation — recorded without adjudication.)

## 13 · Works/Products

As a broadcaster, WVON's "works" are programming: the Good Guys music era (1963–1986), "Lou's Notebook" (Lu Palmer), the "Hotline" evening show (Wesley South), Operation Breadbasket weekly broadcasts, Black Expo coverage, and the post-1986 talk lineup (Cliff Kelley,

Matt McGill, Rev. Al Sharpton, Roland Martin 2005–08, et al.). No discrete catalogued works; see §22–23 for surviving audio/video.

## 14 · Relationships

Human-readable spine. Every edge below also appears in `relationships.json` with provenance, grade, and date range. Only VERIFIED edges are cleared for the verified-only graph.

**Ownership chain:** Leonard Chess + Phil Chess → founded/purchased → WVON (1963–1969) → sold to → Globetrotter Communications (Gillett + Palmer) (1970–1977) → acquired by → Combined Communications (1977) → merged into → Gannett (1978; 1390 held to 1983) → 1450 license to → Midway Broadcasting (Spann + South) (1979–present; calls restored 1984; operating via LMA on 1690 since 2006; facility owned by iHeartMedia). **Predecessor:** WHFC → succeeded-by → WVON (1963-04-01); WXOL → renamed-to → WVON (1984-03-28). **Frequency:** WVON → broadcast-on → 1450 AM (1963–1975); → 1390 AM (1975–1983); → 1450 AM (1984–2006); → 1690 AM (2006–present). **People:** Chess brothers → co-owner-of; Spann → employed-as (Good Guy 1963), → co-founded → Midway (1979), → child → Melody Spann Cooper → chair/CEO → Midway; South → employed-as (1963), → co-founded → Midway (1979), → urged → talk-format switch (1986); Kent → employed-as (1963–1970), → mentored → Don Cornelius → employed-as (pre-1971); Palmer → hosted → "Lou's Notebook"; Kelley → hosted (~1994–2019); Cordell → general-manager-of (1963). **Movements/politics:** WVON → interviewed → MLK, Elijah Muhammad; → carried → Jackson assassination report (1968); → broadcast → Operation Breadbasket meetings; → supported → Washington 1983 campaign (via Palmer); → platformed → Moseley Braun, Obama (2002 fill-in). **Industry:** Chess Records → promoted-via → WVON; Motown (Gordy) → premiered-records-on → WVON; WVON → influenced-airplay → other markets. **Places:** WVON → headquartered-at → 3350 S. Kedzie (1950s–2007) → Soft Sheen/Chatham (2007–2018) → South Loop (2018–). **Competitor:** 1390 facility → calls-changed → WGCI (`canon-wgci`) (1983); WGCI-AM → imitated → WVON talk format (Jan 1989).

## 15 · Claims

Ledger grades use the five working grades; evidence-file classifications REFUTED/UNVERIFIABLE map per Appendix B (noted below). 1:1 with CTL-EF-MEDIA-000001.

| ID | Claim | Ledger grade |
|---|---|---|
| C-001 | WHFC began in 1926 in Chicago under owner Richard W. Hoffman. | SUPPORTED |
| C-002 | WHFC aired ethnic and African-American programming in the 1940s–1960s before the Chess purchase. | SUPPORTED |
| C-003 | In 1963 Leonard and Phil Chess, owners of Chess Records, purchased WHFC-AM 1450 (Cicero license, 1,000 watts) for about $1 million and launched WVON. | VERIFIED |
| C-004 | WVON debuted on April 1, 1963 branded "Voice of the Negro." | VERIFIED |

| ID | Claim | Ledger grade |
|---|---|---|
| C-005 | The station is currently branded "The Voice of the Nation"; when the rename occurred is undocumented. | VERIFIED (current branding) / UNRESOLVED (rename date) |
| C-006 | The launch "Good Guys" were Franklin McCarthy, E. Rodney Jones, Herb Kent, Wesley South, and Pervis Spann, under GM Lucky Cordell. | VERIFIED |
| C-007 | By early 1964 WVON was the second most-listened Chicago station in evening hours. | SUPPORTED |
| C-008 | WVON operated at 1,000 watts day / 250 watts night at launch. | SUPPORTED |
| C-009 | After Leonard Chess's death (Oct 1969), the Chess family sold WVON to Globetrotter Communications (Gillett & Palmer) for $9M; sale consummated 1970. | VERIFIED |
| C-010 | On Feb 5, 1975 at 3:30 p.m., Globetrotter moved WVON from 1450 to the 5,000-watt 1390 signal (ex-WNUS). | VERIFIED |
| C-011 | Globetrotter paid $4,450,000 for WNUS-AM-FM. | DISPUTED ($4.45M Tribune vs. $3.55M station histories) |
| C-012 | Combined Communications bought Globetrotter in 1977; Combined merged with Gannett in 1978. | VERIFIED |
| C-013 | In 1979 Spann and South formed Midway Broadcasting; WXOL premiered on 1450 in August 1979, time-sharing with WCEV from October 1979. | VERIFIED |
| C-014 | Gannett changed 1390's calls from WVON to WGCI in 1983; Midway restored the WVON calls to 1450 on March 28, 1984. | VERIFIED |
| C-015 | In March 1986, at co-owner Wesley South's urging, WVON adopted an all-talk format — Chicago's first Black talk-radio format. | VERIFIED |
| C-016 | The music-era WVON backed Harold Washington's 1983 mayoral campaign through Lu Palmer's "Lou's Notebook" and "We Shall See in '83" organizing. | VERIFIED |
| C-017 | WVON's talk format powered Harold Washington's 1983 mayoral campaign. | DISPUTED (refuted — see CTL-EF-MEDIA-000001) |
| C-018 | WVON interviewed MLK and Elijah Muhammad; Jesse Jackson called in to report King's assassination; DJs used loudspeaker trucks to plead for calm afterward. | SUPPORTED |
| C-019 | Motown's Berry Gordy sent every premiere to WVON first; WVON rotation influenced other markets. | SUPPORTED |
| C-020 | Pervis Spann staged an 87-hour sleepless on-air sit-in raising money for MLK. | SUPPORTED |
| C-021 | | VERIFIED |

| ID | Claim | Ledger grade |
|---|---|---|
| | Herb Kent was retained from WHFC's staff at the 1963 launch, spent 1963–1970 at WVON as "The Cool Gent," and entered the National Radio Hall of Fame in 1995. | |
| C-022 | Don Cornelius was a WVON DJ before creating Soul Train. | SUPPORTED |
| C-023 | WVON's studios were at 3350 S. Kedzie from the early 1950s to 2007, then 87th St./Chatham (2007–2018), then the South Loop (2018–); the 1690 transmitter is at 87th & Kedzie. | SUPPORTED |
| C-024 | On Sept 18, 2006 WVON's calls and programming moved to 1690 AM via an LMA with Clear Channel (now iHeartMedia), which owns the facility; Midway operates it. | VERIFIED |
| C-025 | Melody Spann Cooper — Pervis Spann's daughter, at WVON since age 15, president/GM from 1994, controlling Midway owner from 1999 — is Chair/CEO of Midway Broadcasting. | VERIFIED |
| C-026 | Cliff Kelley spent ~25 years as a WVON host ("Governor of Talk Radio") after 16 years as 20th Ward alderman. | SUPPORTED |
| C-027 | Journalist Lu Palmer hosted "Lou's Notebook" on WVON and spearheaded Washington's 1983 campaign with "We Shall See in '83." | VERIFIED |
| C-028 | E. Rodney Jones was known on air as "Mad Lad." | UNRESOLVED (unverifiable — see CTL-EF-MEDIA-000001) |
| C-029 | Journalist Vernon Jarrett joined Spann and South in the 1979 purchase group. | SUPPORTED |
| C-030 | Pervis Spann and Wesley South purchased the station on April 1, 1963 and created the "Voice of the Negro" identity. | DISPUTED (refuted — see CTL-EF-MEDIA-000001) |
| C-031 | Roland Martin hosted on WVON from October 2005 to October 2008. | SUPPORTED |
| C-032 | Then–State Senator Barack Obama filled in for Cliff Kelley on WVON in 2002. | SUPPORTED |
| C-033 | Yvonne Daniels joined WVON as morning-drive host in 1982. | SUPPORTED |
| C-034 | WVON served as a lucrative marketing outlet for Chess Records and the national R&B/soul industry. | SUPPORTED |
| C-035 | WVON broadcast Rev. Jesse Jackson's weekly Operation Breadbasket meetings and covered the Black Expo. | SUPPORTED |
| C-036 | The Good Guys "held Black Chicago captive for more than a decade," ranking consistently in the market's top five. | SUPPORTED |
| C-037 | WVON's audience rose ~50% after the WVON calls returned to 1450 in 1984. | SUPPORTED |

## 16 · Evidence

Evidence for each claim is fully developed in CTL-EF-MEDIA-000001 (`evidence-file.md`), per-claim records EF-C-001…EF-C-037. Summary of strongest anchors: - **Contemporary trade press (primary-adjacent):** Billboard 1963-04-13 (launch), 1964-03-28 (ratings), 1968-06-22 / 1969-08-23 (playlist), 1969-12-13 ($9M sale), 1976-09-11 (WFMT interim), 1977-05-14 (Combined), 1979-08-04 (WXOL), 1979-11-03 (blues sales); Broadcasting 1963-02-18 (sale), 1970-09-28 (FCC approval), 1948 (AM histories); 1964 Broadcasting Yearbook (power); Chicago Tribune 1975-02-06 (1390 move), 1975-04-03, 1979-03-04, 2013-03-29 (Reich 50-year history + timeline). - **Legislative (primary-adjacent):** Congressional Record — Davis 2013-04-17 (50th anniversary tribute), Rush 2019 (Senate tribute), Rush 2022-03-24 (Spann tribute); Illinois HR0201 (2013). - **Regulatory (primary):** FCC history cards for WXOL/WCEV; FCC LMS facility record for 1690 (Facility ID 87178); FCC call-change record WRLL→WVON 2006-09-18. - **Scholarly (secondary, strong):** Searcy 2012 (Loyola PhD dissertation); Benton 2007 (cited in DePaul paper); Pruter, *Chicago Soul*. - **Institutional oral history (primary):** The HistoryMakers finding aids — Herb Kent (A2000_026), Wesley South (A2000_037), Lu Palmer (A2002_087); Melody Spann Cooper biography. - **Contemporary journalism (secondary):** In These Times 1989-03-15 (Muwakkil — talk-format date, WGCI-AM competition); Final Call 2022-04-05 (Spann obituary); Chicago Crusader 2018-10-03 (studio move); Washington Post 1978-05-09 (Gannett merger); docs.house.gov 2024-04-30 (Spann Cooper testimony).

## 17 · Primary Sources

1. **FCC History Cards — WXOL (1450 AM), Cicero.** fcc.gov. Document the 1979 licensing, Midway Broadcasting ownership, WXOL→WVON call change (1984-03-28). Repository: FCC. Access: public via fcc.gov history-card scans.
2. **FCC History Cards — WCEV (1450 AM).** fcc.gov. Document the Migala Communications time-share. Same access.
3. **FCC LMS Facility Record — WVON 1690 AM, Facility ID 87178.** Licensing authority record: Berwyn license, 10,000W day / 1,000W night, transmitter coordinates; call-sign history WHTE → WRLL → WVON (2006-09-18). Access: public, FCC LMS.
4. **Billboard (contemporary trade press), 1963–1979.** Issues dated in §16: 1963-04-13 ("New Chess R.&B. 'Baby' Shows Face in Chicago"), 1964-03-28, 1968-06-22, 1969-08-23, 1969-12-13, 1976-09-11, 1977-05-14, 1979-08-04, 1979-11-03. Repository: Google Books / worldradiohistory.com. Contemporary = primary-adjacent.
5. **Broadcasting magazine (contemporary), 1948–1970.** 1948-10-25 ("AM Histories," Chicago study), 1963-02-18 (p.106, sale report), 1970-09-28 (p.30, FCC approval); *1964 Broadcasting Yearbook* (p.B-48, power). Repository: worldradiohistory.com.
6. **Chicago Tribune (contemporary).** Gary Deeb, "WVON moves to WNUS," 1975-02-06, p.B10; Deeb, "A youthful 'free' alternative to the AM vacuum at 1450," 1975-04-03; "The dark side of the medium," Chicago Tribune Magazine, 1979-03-04; Howard Reich, "50 years of Chicago's WVON," 2013-03-29 + "WVON timeline."

7. **Congressional Record.** Rep. Danny K. Davis, 2013-04-17, Vol.159 No.52 (H2072) — 50th-anniversary tribute; Sen. tribute via Rep. Bobby Rush, 2019, Vol.165 (S1891–S1892); Rep. Bobby Rush, 2022-03-24 — Pervis Spann tribute. Repository: congress.gov / govinfo.gov. Legislative tributes = primary-adjacent (official record; celebratory bias noted).
8. **Illinois House Resolution HR0201 (2013).** 98th General Assembly; 50th-anniversary resolution. Repository: ilga.gov (PDF).
9. **The HistoryMakers oral-history finding aids (primary — interviewees' own accounts):** Herb Kent (A2000_026), Wesley South (A2000_037), Lutrelle "Lu" Palmer II (A2002_087). Repository: thehistorymakers.org. Full video interviews archived by The HistoryMakers (Chicago).
10. **U.S. House testimony — Melody Spann Cooper, 2024-04-30.** "Preserving Americans' Access to AM Radio," Subcommittee on Innovation, Data and Commerce; witness disclosure lists "Midway Broadcasting Corporation – WVON 1690AM and WRLL 1450AM." Repository: docs.house.gov.
11. **Station's own history** (wvon.com/about-us/our-history; press materials, e.g., 2014 PRLog release). Subject's own account = primary for branding claims; self-interested — corroborate dates independently.

## 18 · Secondary Sources

1. **Searcy, Jennifer. "The Voice of the Negro: African American Radio, WVON, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Chicago." PhD diss., Loyola University Chicago, 2012.** The dedicated scholarly treatment; abstract confirms the dual marketing/movement thesis. Full text via ecommons.luc.edu (download availability not confirmed in this pass — see §28).
2. **Benton (2007)** — cited in Ramsay/DePaul paper for Globetrotter sale ($9M), 1986 talk switch. Full citation not recovered in this pass — flagged weak until verified (see §28).
3. **Pruter, Robert. *Chicago Soul*.** Cited via Herb Kent biography for the March 1963 lineup and Kent's on-air style.
4. **Kent, Herb, and David Smallwood. *The Cool Gent: The Nine Lives of Radio Legend Herb Kent*. Lawrence Hill Books, 2009.** Memoir (primary for Kent's own account; not directly consulted — cited via obituaries/profiles).
5. **Danois, Ericka Blount. *Love, Peace and Soul*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2013.** Launch-era roster; Gordy/Motown claim; Cornelius/Soul Train link.
6. **Ghrist, John R. *Valley Voices: A Radio History*. Crossroads Communications, 1996.** WHFC early history (pp.358–364).
7. **Muwakkil, Salim. "Black talk radio sends..." *In These Times*, March 15, 1989.** Contemporary account: Owens "March '86" quote; Lu Palmer on the 1983 and 1987 campaigns; WGCI-AM's January 1989 talk switch. Via unz.com scan.

8. **Final Call, "Pervis Spann: The 'Blues Man' Brought a Voice, Advocacy and Power to Black Chicago," 2022-04-05.** Obituary/biography: Spann career, Midway purchase group (incl. Jarrett), 87-hour sit-in, Breadbasket/Black Expo.
9. **Fong-Torres, Ben. *The Hits Just Keep on Coming*. Hal Leonard, 2001.** Yvonne Daniels 1982.
10. **Ramsay, Ed. "WVON Radio and the Black Public Sphere." DePaul University student paper.** Weak secondary (student work) — used only as a pointer to Searcy/Benton, not as evidence.
11. **Wikipedia, "WVON."** Tertiary aggregator — used as a finding aid; every material fact re-sourced to its cited references above. Per MEDIA-001's regrade rule, Wikipedia alone never clears a claim.

## 19 · Archival Collections

- **The HistoryMakers Digital Archive (Chicago)** — video oral histories: Herb Kent (A2000_026), Wesley South (A2000_037), Lutrelle "Lu" Palmer II (A2002_087), Pervis Spann (biography on file), Melody Spann-Cooper (biography). Finding aids public at thehistorymakers.org; full interviews by archive access. Rights: interviewees/estate hold their words.
- **Loyola University Chicago eCommons** — Searcy dissertation (2012), Dissertations 688. https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/688/
- **FCC History Card microfilm scans** — via fcc.gov; public.
- **Chicago Defender archives** — Lu Palmer's journalism; WVON advertising/ratings traces (not searched in this pass — see §28).
- **No station paper archive located** in this pass — WVON/Midway corporate records' repository unknown (see §28).

## 20 · Documents

- Illinois HR0201 (2013) — full text via ilga.gov PDF (3 pp.).
- Congressional Record tributes (Davis 2013; Rush 2019; Rush 2022) — full text via congress.gov/govinfo.gov.
- FCC call-sign change record: WRLL → WVON, 2006-09-18 (Facility 87178).
- Billboard/Broadcasting items listed in §17 (contemporary).
- No deeds, contracts, or sale agreements recovered in this pass (see §28).

## 21 · Photographs

Rights-cleared images only. **None verified as cleared in this pass** — the log starts empty per template rule:

| Candidate | Creator/Date | Source | Rights status |
|---|---|---|---|
| "Sign for WVON 1450 AM above and behind Lakeside Coffee Shop at 2141 S Indiana, Chicago, March 1979" (described in station history; likely Wikimedia Commons file used on Wikipedia) | Unknown photographer, March 1979 | Wikimedia Commons (to verify) | **UNCLEARED — verify per-file license on Commons before any use** |
| 3350 S. Kedzie studio/tower building | — | — | Not located; do not reproduce until sourced with rights |
| Melody Spann Cooper portrait (Gift of Hope bio page) | Powell Photography (via Chicago Magazine) | giftofhope.org | **UNCLEARED — institutional bio use only; no reuse rights evidenced** |

**Data-driven graphics (no rights issues; CTL-generated):** the ownership/frequency/format timeline (essential — see `visuals.md`) and the studio/transmitter site map are produced as original CTL graphics, not reproductions.

## 22 · Audio

- **Archival broadcast audio (1960s–70s airchecks)** circulates among collectors (e.g., 1965 Herb Kent aircheck; 1967 E. Rodney Jones/Jim Maloney newscast) on fan/archivist channels. **Rights-sensitive: CTL does not host or embed these.** Described only, never reproduced, per media rules.
- **The HistoryMakers oral histories** (Kent, South, Palmer) — interviewees own their words; access via archive. Candidate for licensed/institutional-platform excerpt only with permission.
- No rights-cleared WVON audio located in this pass.

## 23 · Video

- **The HistoryMakers** maintains video oral histories (Kent, South, Palmer, Spann). If The HistoryMakers' official channel publishes excerpts, those are the only embed candidates — **embedding not verified in this pass**; record channel identity, URL, timestamp range, and embed permission before publication. Video ILLUSTRATES, never evidences.
- Fan-uploaded aircheck compilations and the "WVON Sold for $9M in 1970" short (YouTube, 2026) are **not** embed candidates (non-institutional channels; rights-sensitive archival audio).
- No embeds included in v1.0.

## 24 · Maps

- **Studio/transmitter site map (CTL-generated):** 3350 S. Kedzie (South Lawndale) → 87th St./Chatham → South Loop studios; 87th & Kedzie transmitter; Berwyn/Cicero cities of license.

Historical community-area boundaries labeled with dates; modern basemap not projected backward.

- **Frequency/coverage note:** 1,000W (1963) → 5,000W 1390 (1975) → 10,000W day 1690 (2006) — coverage expansion stated from power figures, not modeled.

## 25 · Data

**Ownership/format/frequency table (the dossier's core dataset):**

| Era | Dates | Owner | Frequency | Format | Power |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WHFC | 1926–1963-03 | R.W. Hoffman | 1450 (from 1941) | Ethnic/Black (1940s–60s) | — |
| Chess | 1963-04-01–1969/70 | Leonard & Phil Chess | 1450 | R&B/soul ("Good Guys") | 1kW day / 250W night |
| Globetrotter | 1970–1977 | Gillett & Palmer | 1450 → 1390 (1975-02-05) | R&B/soul, declining news | 5kW (1390) |
| Gannett | 1978–1983 | Gannett (via Combined) | 1390 | R&B/soul | 5kW |
| Midway I | 1979–1984 | Midway (as WXOL) | 1450 (time-share WCEV) | Blues (WXOL) | — |
| Midway II | 1984–1986 | Midway (as WVON) | 1450 | R&B/soul | — |
| Midway III | 1986–2006 | Midway | 1450 | Black talk | — |
| Midway IV | 2006–present | Midway (operator; iHeartMedia owns 1690 facility) | 1690 | Black talk | 10kW day / 1kW night |

Sources per row in evidence file. Limitations: power figures for the Midway 1450 years not documented in sources consulted; WXOL-era financials absent.

## 26 · Controversies/Conflicts

1. **The 1983 anachronism (historiographical).** The Davis 2013 tribute's sequencing implies the talk format elected Harold Washington; BMI-002's red team (2026-09-28) caught it. Corrected in §27 (MYTH-001). The underlying facts both sides agree on: WVON backed Washington in 1983 (music era, Palmer) and adopted talk in 1986.
2. **2020 Lightfoot-coverage dispute.** Morning hosts Todd Stroger and Maze Jackson resigned (summer 2020) after management barred criticism of Mayor Lori Lightfoot and ordered critical callers disconnected; both moved to 1570 WBGX. Recorded from station histories; management's rationale not documented in sources consulted — no adjudication.

3. **WNUS purchase price.** $4,450,000 (Chicago Tribune 1975, contemporary) vs. $3,550,000 (later station histories, via BMI-002). Both recorded; contemporary figure provisionally stronger.
4. **Chess-era framing.** White (Jewish immigrant) ownership of the "Voice of the Negro" is noted across sources; Searcy's dissertation treats the commercial/movement duality directly. CTL records the ownership fact and the scholarly treatment without editorializing.
5. **Spann/South 1963 purchase claim.** The Rush 2022 Spann tribute's internally inconsistent passage (they "purchased the radio station" April 1, 1963) is contradicted by the Chess-purchase record — adjudicated REFUTED in evidence file, ledger DISPUTED.

## 27 · Myth vs. Evidence

**MYTH-001 — "WVON's talk format powered Harold Washington's 1983 mayoral campaign."** VERDICT: **False (anachronism).** EVIDENCE: Talk format began March 1986 per GM Hoyett Owens (In These Times, 1989); Washington was elected April 1983. What the sources support: the *music-era* station backed Washington through Lu Palmer's organizing ("We Shall See in '83"; HistoryMakers; Davis 2013); the *talk* format served Washington's 1987 reelection (Palmer: "In 1987 the station performed beyond and above the call of duty for Harold's cause"). CORRECTED WORDING: "WVON backed Harold Washington's 1983 campaign as a Black music station; its all-talk format, launched in 1986, then served subsequent campaigns including Washington's 1987 reelection."

**MYTH-002 — "Spann and South bought WVON in 1963 and created the 'Voice of the Negro.'"** VERDICT: **False.** EVIDENCE: Leonard and Phil Chess bought WHFC and launched WVON April 1, 1963 (Billboard 1963; three legislative sources). Spann and South bought the *1450 license* in 1979 and reclaimed the WVON calls in 1984. The claim appears in an otherwise reliable 2022 Congressional tribute and is internally inconsistent. CORRECTED WORDING: "Spann and South were original 1963 WVON DJs who bought the 1450 frequency in 1979 and restored the WVON call letters in 1984."

**MYTH-003 — "WVON went all-talk in January 1989."** VERDICT: **False (misattribution).** EVIDENCE: January 1989 is when *WGCI-AM* — Gannett's station on the former WVON 1390 facility — switched to Black talk to compete with WVON (In These Times, 1989). WVON's own switch was March 1986. This resolves the BMI-002 red-team's 1986-vs.-1989 dispute.

**MYTH-004 — "WVON stands for 'The Voice of the Nation' originally" / "Voice of a Nation."** VERDICT: **Exaggerated/misremembered.** EVIDENCE: All legislative and contemporary sources give the 1963 branding as "Voice of the Negro"; "Voice of the Nation" is the current branding (Rush 2019; station materials), rename date unknown. CORRECTED WORDING: "WVON launched as the 'Voice of the Negro' (1963) and is now branded the 'Voice of the Nation.'"

**MYTH-005 — "The Motown-first arrangement."** VERDICT: **Substantially true but single-threaded.** EVIDENCE: Davis 2013 tribute + Danois 2013 both report Gordy sent every premiere

to WVON first; no contradictory evidence found, but no Motown-company or Gordy-primary confirmation in this pass. Keep attributed.

## 28 · Knowledge Gaps

**Searched but not found:** - The date of the "Voice of the Negro" → "Voice of the Nation" rebrand (no source dates it). - WNUS-AM-FM 1975 purchase price reconciliation ($4.45M vs. $3.55M). - Chess-era advertiser lists and revenue figures (only fragmentary trade-press traces: Billboard 1951 on national advertisers' use of Black shows — WHFC era; Billboard 1964 ratings). - WVON/Midway corporate paper archive (repository unknown; FCC filings beyond history cards not pulled). - Full text of Searcy 2012 dissertation (abstract + citations used; PDF download not confirmed in this pass) and Benton 2007 (full citation unrecovered). - Individual tenures for most post-launch Good Guys (Ricardo, Crane, Cook, Cobb, Wood, Maloney, Lee, Pegue, Johnson, Hale, Fitzhugh) beyond roster membership. - Wesley South's death date; Franklin McCarthy's biography. - Exact addresses: Hotel Flanders (1926), Cermak Rd. Cicero facility, Soft Sheen building number, current South Loop studio address (withheld as non-public business address in any case).

**Records known lost/inaccessible:** 1960s–70s broadcast tapes survive only as collector airchecks (rights-encumbered); Globetrotter-era internal records not located.

**Future questions:** Did the 1975 1390 move materially change the station's Black audience share (ratings books)? What was the WXOL blues-format revenue model? How did the 1996 Telecom Act affect Midway's competitive position (Spann Cooper's HistoryMakers bio gestures at this)? Oral histories with surviving staff (engineers, producers like Perri Small) are the highest-value next step.

## 29 · Knowledge Graph

- **Dossier entity:** `canon-wvon` (reuses audit canonical ID; subject).
- **Dossier-local entities:** 34 in `entities.json` (IDs `RD-MEDIA-000001-###`), covering predecessor/successor stations, owners, personalities, movements, and places.
- **Relationship edges:** 44 in `relationships.json`; **28 VERIFIED** (cleared for verified-only graph ingestion), 14 SUPPORTED, 1 PROVISIONAL, 1 DISPUTED (refuted 1963-purchase claim, both sides recorded).
- **Verified-only ingestion list:** edges flagged `"verified_only": true` (E001–E012, E014–E016, E018–E024, E026, E029, E031, E035, E036, E039).
- **Cross-project edges:** `canon-wvon` ↔ `canon-chess-records`, `canon-wgci`, `canon-operation-push`, `canon-chicago-defender` reuse audit canonical IDs for graph merge.

## 30 · Related CTL Entities

- **CTL-DR-BMI-002 (Sound of Black Chicago)** — Track C ("Radio") is the direct predecessor: WVON entity (7 claims), Chess-era role, DJ biographies (Herb Kent, Pervis Spann, Wesley

South, E. Rodney Jones), the 1983-anachronism red-team finding this dossier corrects and extends. This dossier supersedes BMI-002's WVON claims where re-sourced.

- **CTL-DR-MEDIA-001 (Who Controls the Story?)** — national Black-media infrastructure; WVON is a node in its radio layer. MEDIA-001's regrade discipline (Wikipedia-alone → Provisional) applied throughout this dossier.
- **CTL-DR-BPM-003 (The Black Press)** — Lu Palmer (Defender/Black X-Press), Chicago Defender as ecosystem neighbor.
- **CTL-DR-SCI-004 (Sacred Ground)** — Operation PUSH/Breadbasket broadcasts; church-based movement overlap.
- **CTL-DR-INST-001** — Midway Broadcasting as Black institutional ownership case.
- **canon-wgci / canon-wjpc** — sibling Chicago Black-radio entities (competitor/successor-frequency relationships).

## 31 · Bibliography

**Primary / primary-adjacent:** - Billboard, 1963-04-13; 1964-03-28; 1968-06-22; 1969-08-23; 1969-12-13; 1976-09-11; 1977-05-14; 1979-08-04; 1979-11-03. - Broadcasting, 1948-10-25; 1963-02-18; 1970-09-28; *1964 Broadcasting Yearbook*. - Chicago Tribune: Deeb 1975-02-06; Deeb 1975-04-03; Tribune Magazine 1979-03-04; Reich 2013-03-29 (+ timeline). - Congressional Record: Davis 2013-04-17 (Vol.159 No.52); Rush 2019 (Vol.165, S1891–92); Rush 2022-03-24. - Illinois HR0201 (2013), ilga.gov. - FCC History Cards: WXOL, WCEV; FCC LMS Facility 87178. - The HistoryMakers finding aids: A2000_026 (Kent), A2000_037 (South), A2002_087 (Palmer); Spann and Spann-Cooper biographies. - U.S. House Subcommittee testimony, Spann Cooper, 2024-04-30 (docs.house.gov). - WVON station history (wvon.com/about-us/our-history); 2014 press release (PRLog).

**Secondary:** - Searcy, Jennifer. PhD diss., Loyola University Chicago, 2012. - Benton (2007) — citation incomplete; flagged. - Pruter, Robert. *Chicago Soul*. - Kent, Herb & Smallwood, David. *The Cool Gent*. Lawrence Hill Books, 2009. - Danois, Ericka Blount. *Love, Peace and Soul*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2013. - Ghrist, John R. *Valley Voices*. Crossroads, 1996. - Muwakkil, Salim. *In These Times*, 1989-03-15. - Final Call, 2022-04-05. - Fong-Torres, Ben. *The Hits Just Keep on Coming*. Hal Leonard, 2001. - Chicago Crusader, 2018-10-03. - Washington Post, 1978-05-09. - Ramsay, Ed. "WVON Radio and the Black Public Sphere." DePaul (student paper — pointer only).

## 32 · Citation

CultureTechLens. "WVON — The Voice of the Negro / The Voice of the Nation." Research Dossier CTL-RD-MEDIA-000001, v1.0. Evidence file CTL-EF-MEDIA-000001. Chicago: CultureTechLens, 2026-09-28. Accessed [date]. Claim grades: VERIFIED / SUPPORTED / PROVISIONAL / DISPUTED / UNRESOLVED; see evidence file for REFUTED and UNVERIFIABLE classifications.

### 33 · Rights

Rights log (starts empty; nothing cleared by default): - **Images:** No image cleared in v1.0. All photographic candidates listed in §21 as UNCLEARED pending per-file license verification. - **Audio:** No audio hosted or embedded. Collector airchecks described only. - **Video:** No embeds in v1.0. HistoryMakers-channel excerpts are candidates pending channel verification and embed-permission check. - **Documents:** Legislative and FCC documents are public records; quoted briefly with attribution. Trade-press excerpts (Billboard/Broadcasting/Tribune) described or briefly quoted under fair-use research purposes; not reproduced at length. - **Data graphics:** Ownership/format timeline and site map are original CTL creations — no third-party rights.

### 34 · Version History

- **v1.0 — 2026-09-28.** Initial dossier. Establishes full ownership/frequency timeline from primary evidence; corrects the WVON/1983 talk-format anachronism (BMI-002 red-team finding) with March 1986 dating from a contemporary GM quote; resolves the 1986-vs.-1989 talk dispute as WGCI-AM misattribution; records WNUS price dispute and "Voice of the Nation" rename-date gap. Evidence file CTL-EF-MEDIA-000001 (Type 04). Status: Research. Authorized by: parent orchestrator task 20b7c26b.

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## References

Primary/secondary labeled. Weak sources flagged.

### Primary (regulatory, archival, subject's own)


- FCC History Cards — WXOL (1450 AM), Cicero. [primary] fcc.gov. Licensing, time-share, call change.
- FCC History Cards — WCEV (1450 AM). [primary] fcc.gov. Migala time-share.
- FCC LMS — WVON 1690 AM, Facility ID 87178. [primary] fcc.gov. Berwyn license, power, coordinates, call history WHTE→WRLL→WVON.
- The HistoryMakers finding aids — Herb Kent A2000_026; Wesley South A2000_037; Lutrelle "Lu" Palmer II A2002_087. [primary — oral history] thehistorymakers.org.
- The HistoryMakers biography — Melody Spann-Cooper. [primary-adjacent] thehistorymakers.org.
- U.S. House testimony — Melody Spann Cooper, 2024-04-30, Subcommittee on Innovation, Data and Commerce. [primary] docs.house.gov.
- Illinois HR0201 (2013), 98th General Assembly. [primary-adjacent — legislative] ilga.gov PDF.
- WVON station history (wvon.com/about-us/our-history); 2014 press release (PRLog). [primary — subject's own; self-interested] — dates corroborated independently before grading.

### Primary-adjacent (contemporary trade press, newspapers)

- Billboard: 1963-04-13; 1964-03-28; 1968-06-22; 1969-08-23; 1969-12-13; 1976-09-11; 1977-05-14; 1979-08-04; 1979-11-03. [primary-adjacent] Google Books / worldradiohistory.com.
- Broadcasting: 1948-10-25; 1963-02-18; 1970-09-28; 1964 Broadcasting Yearbook p.B-48. [primary-adjacent] worldradiohistory.com.
- Chicago Tribune: Deeb 1975-02-06 (1390 move); Deeb 1975-04-03 (WNUS price); Tribune Magazine 1979-03-04; Reich 2013-03-29 (+ WVON timeline). [primary-adjacent / secondary] chicagotribune.com.
- Washington Post 1978-05-09 (Gannett/Combined). [primary-adjacent].
- In These Times, Muwakkil, 1989-03-15 (GM Owens "March '86" quote; WGCI-AM Jan 1989; Palmer 1983/1987). [primary-adjacent] unz.com scan.
- Chicago Crusader 2018-10-03 (South Loop studio move). [secondary].

### Legislative (primary-adjacent; celebratory bias — corroborate dates independently)

- Congressional Record: Davis 2013-04-17 (Vol.159 No.52, H2072–H2074); Rush 2019 (Vol.165, S1891–S1892); Rush 2022-03-24 (Spann tribute). [primary-adjacent] congress.gov / govinfo.gov.
- ⚠️ The Rush 2022 tribute contains an internally inconsistent passage (Spann/South "purchased the station" 1963) — adjudicated REFUTED in evidence file. Legislative sources are not independently corroborating on contested facts.

### Secondary

- Searcy, Jennifer. PhD diss., Loyola University Chicago, 2012. [strong secondary — dedicated scholarly treatment] ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/688. ⚠️ Full text not inspected in this pass; abstract + cited claims used.
- Pruter, Robert. *Chicago Soul*. [secondary — specialist scholarship] — via Kent biography.
- Danois, Ericka Blount. *Love, Peace and Soul*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2013. [secondary].
- Ghrist, John R. *Valley Voices*. Crossroads Communications, 1996. [secondary — specialist reference].
- Kent, Herb & Smallwood, David. *The Cool Gent*. Lawrence Hill Books, 2009. [secondary — memoir; not directly consulted].
- Fong-Torres, Ben. *The Hits Just Keep on Coming*. Hal Leonard, 2001. [secondary].
- Final Call 2022-04-05 (Spann obituary/biography). [secondary — Black press].
- Gift of Hope bio (Spann Cooper). [secondary]. IBA 2023 (Board Chair). [secondary].
- Benton (2007). ⚠️ **Weak — full citation unrecovered; used only via Ramsay/DePaul student paper.** Flagged until verified.

- Ramsay, Ed. "WVON Radio and the Black Public Sphere." DePaul (student paper). ⚠️ **Weak — pointer only, never evidence.**
- Wikipedia, "WVON." ⚠️ **Tertiary — finding aid only; every material fact re-sourced.** Per MEDIA-001 discipline, Wikipedia alone never clears a claim.
- Muck Rack outlet record (WVON 1690AM). ⚠️ **Tertiary/aggregator — LMA description only.**
- wazeesupperclub.com (Matt McGill / Maze Jackson notes). ⚠️ **Tertiary — not relied upon; corroborated facts used only.**
- indigosunset.ning.com / msoldschool.ning.com (fan archives). ⚠️ **Not sources — research leads only.**
- prlog.org 2014 press release (Che Smith / "Speak Up"). [primary — station's own] — branding quote only.