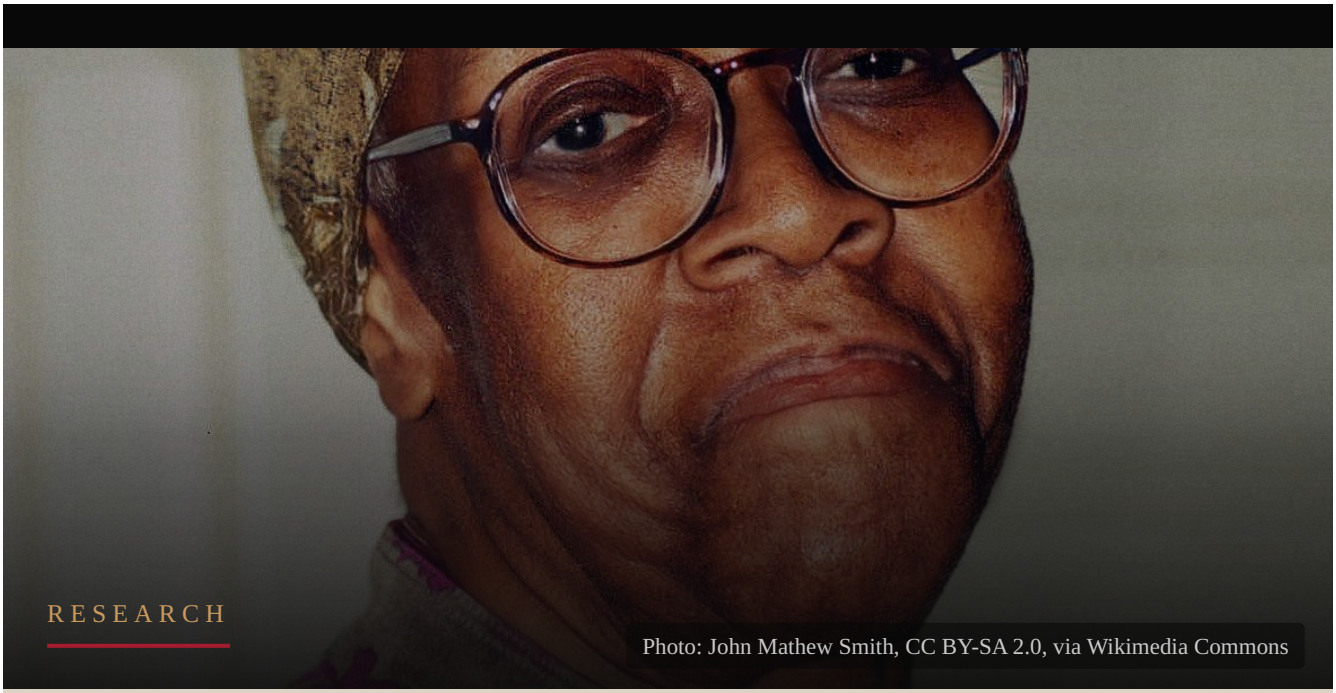

RESEARCH

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Who Controls the Story?

William Maxey

CultureTechLens NFP · 2026-09-28

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The Black media infrastructure of America — national scope, with CTL-DR-BPM-003 as the Chicago depth layer.

Research ID	CTL-DR-MEDIA-001
Version	Research package v0.1 complete · 2026-09-28

Summary

Who controls the Black media story in America, how did that control change, and what survived?

Key findings

- Ownership ≠ targeting. The distinction is the analytical spine: BET, iHeart/Audacy urban radio, and much Black-targeted cable are not Black-owned. (Verified)
- Policy built and broke Black radio ownership. Minority Tax Certificate (1978) → growth; repeal (1995) + Telecom Act (1996) → collapse. (Verified)
- Family ownership is print's survival pattern. The Murphys/AFRO (132 years), the Real Times Inc. rescue of the Sengstacke chain (2003, ~$12M), multigenerational ownership transfers. (Verified/Provisional)
- Ad spend bypasses Black media by industry-reported measures. 5.2% multicultural share of spend; diverse-owned media 2.5% of largest holding companies' 2023 spend; $51M (1.02%) of $5B+ federal ad spend to Black-owned firms FY14–23 (GAO via NNPA). All labeled reported-not-independent. (Provisional)
- Carriage is the distribution choke point. Allen's §1981 litigation produced Xfinity carriage (settled 2020–21); cable blackouts recur as leverage events. (Verified)

Related research: pair with The Black Press (CTL-DR-BPM-003).

Evidence and grading

140 deduplicated entities (174 raw across six tracks; 34 duplicates merged via 22 merge groups, zero merge conflicts); 482 graded claims (297 Verified · 164 Provisional · 18 Disputed · 3 Unresolved); 255 timeline events 1827–2026 (206 Verified, 36 Provisional, 13 Disputed); 78 verified-only relationships; 335 deduplicated sources (45 primary, 290 secondary). Entity mix: 42 Business, 29 Person, 25 Publication, 19 Organization, 12 Institution, 6 Event, 4 Technology, 3 Policy.

Claims are graded on a controlled vocabulary: VERIFIED, SUPPORTED, PROVISIONAL, DISPUTED, UNRESOLVED (plus REFUTED and UNVERIFIABLE in evidence files). Only VERIFIED claims feed verified-only knowledge-graph edges; lower grades are shown with their grade visible. Unknowns are never reported as zero.

Limitations

39% of originally-“Verified” claims rested on Wikipedia; 38 were downgraded to Provisional (the rest had independent corroboration). Re-sourcing is the top backlog.

References

335 deduplicated sources: 45 primary, 290 secondary.

Red team

Merge-time audit, 2026-09-28: 22 cross-track merge groups resolved 34 duplicates into 140 canonical entities with zero merge conflicts; 38 Wikipedia-only “Verified” claims regraded to Provisional.

Full package in the open research repository

← Back to the research repository

> *Cite as: CultureTechLens, "Who Controls the Story? (CTL-DR-MEDIA-001)," 2026-09-28.*

Source: CultureTechLens

Trust & evidence

Evidence before authority. CultureTechLens publishes its methods, its limits, and its corrections alongside its findings. Claims carry grades — VERIFIED, SUPPORTED, PROVISIONAL, DISPUTED, UNRESOLVED — and unknowns are never reported as zero.

Every claim graded. Every source named. Every correction public — see the corrections log.

Methodology · How to cite · Corrections · Verification · Index methodology