

Black-owned television stations nearly extinct

By Nisa Islam Muhammad
Special to Sentinel-Voice
WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Over the past year, Black TV station ownership dropped by 60 percent with the total number falling from 19 to eight and making Black ownership almost non-existent, according to a recent report.

The dwindling numbers of Black-owned broadcast outlets was also discussed during a Dec. 5 congressional hearing about media consolidation and how having fewer owners control more stations contributes to the problem.

"Minority television ownership is in such a precarious

state that the loss of a single minority-owned company results in a disastrous decline," said S. Derek Turner, research director of Free Press and lead author of "Out of the Picture 2007," an up-



dated analysis of the impact of consolidation on minority and female television station ownership.

"Permitting any more consolidation will only further diminish the number of

"Since enactment of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the number of African American-owned broadcast station licenses has fallen by 40 percent."

— James Winston
NABOB Executive Director

minority-owned stations," he warned.

Much of the decline can be attributed to the bankruptcy and subsequent change in ownership of a single company — Granite Broadcasting, formerly the country's largest minority-owned broadcast television company.

While many are alarmed at the drastic decline, the Federal Communications Commission is practically mute on the topic they complain. Critics charge Chairman Kevin Martin with pushing new rules that allow a proposal to eliminate the longstanding "newspaper/

"...Despite making up 34 percent of the U.S. population, racial and ethnic minorities own only 7.7 percent of radio stations and just over three percent of television stations."

— E. Faye Williams
Chair of the National Congress of Black Women



broadcast cross-ownership" ban. That ban prohibits ownership of a television station and major newspaper by the same company in particular instances.

If Martin removed the prohibition in the top 20 markets and only let newspapers combine with broadcast stations outside of the four top-rated channels, minority ownership would suffer serious negative consequences, said Free Press. Nearly half of the stations currently owned by people of color are in the top 20 markets, and none of these are among the top four stations, it noted.

The House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet held a hearing

Dec. 5 on Oversight of the Federal Communications Commission-Media Ownership to address these issues.

James L. Winston, executive director of NABOB, the National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters, testified.

"Throughout our existence, NABOB has been involved in Congress's efforts to determine the amount and type of regulation to impose upon the ownership of radio and television stations.

NABOB actively opposed the enactment of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, because we knew that it would result in massive industry consolidation of (See Television, Page 7)

Study: Whites get better pain meds

Special to Sentinel-Voice
Emergency room doctors are prescribing strong narcotics more often to patients who complain of pain, but non-White patients are less likely to get them than Whites, a new study finds.

Even for the severe pain of kidney stones, Blacks and other non-White patients were prescribed narcotics such as oxycodone and morphine less frequently than Whites.

The analysis of more than 150,000 emergency room visits over 13 years found differences in prescribing by race in both urban and rural hospitals, in all U.S. regions and for every type of pain.

"The gaps between Whites and non-Whites have not appeared to close at all," said study co-author Dr. Mark Pletcher of the University of California, San Francisco.

The study appears in the current *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Prescribing narcotics for pain in emergency rooms rose during the study, from 23 percent of those complaining of pain in 1993 to 37 percent in 2005.

The increase coincided

with changing attitudes among doctors who now regard pain management as a key to healing.

Doctors in accredited hospitals must ask patients about pain, just as they monitor vital signs such as temperature and pulse.

Even with the increase, the racial gap endured, Linda Simoni-Wastila of the University of Maryland, Baltimore, School of Pharmacy said the race gap finding may reveal some doctors' suspicions that minority patients could be drug abusers lying about pain to get narcotics.

The irony, she said, is that Blacks are the least likely group to abuse prescription drugs.

The study's authors said doctors may be less likely to see signs of painkiller abuse in White patients, or they may be undertreating pain in minority patients.

Patient behavior may play a role, Pletcher said. Some non-White patients "may be less likely to keep complaining about their pain or feel they deserve good pain control," he said.

Stricter protocols for prescribing narcotics may help

close the gap.

A New York hospital recently studied its emergency patients and found no racial disparity in narcotics prescribed for broken bones.

In the study, opioid narcotics were prescribed in 31 percent of the pain-related visits involving Whites, 28 percent for Asians, 24 percent for Hispanics and 23 percent for Blacks.

Non-White patients were slightly more likely than Whites to get aspirin, ibuprofen and similar drugs for pain.

In more than 2,000 visits for kidney stones, Whites got narcotics 72 percent of the time, Hispanics 68 percent, Asians 67 percent and Blacks 56 percent.

The data came from a well-regarded government survey that collects information on emergency room visits for four weeks each year from 500 U.S. hospitals.

The new study was funded by federal grants.

"It's time to move past describing disparities and work on narrowing them," said Dr. Thomas L. Fisher, an emergency room doctor at the University of Chicago Medical Center who was not

involved in the study.

Fisher, who is Black, said he is not immune to letting subconscious assumptions inappropriately influence his work as a doctor.

"If anybody argues they have no social biases that sway clinical practice, they have not been thoughtful about the issue or they're not being honest with themselves," he said.

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12:30 p.m.	Close

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TAP INTO OUR RESOURCE

School

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sode," said Rendell representative Chuck Ardo. "I can't speak to the rumors."

At stake is the 4.5-acre site where the John Wanamaker School sits. At the recent SRC meeting, members voted 3-1 to award the property to Brighter Hope LP but not without some restrictions.

After the deal is settled, Bright Hope has 24 months to begin development on the site with the Goldenberg Group. The church plans to build a charter school, affordable housing units or a retail complex.

The other restriction is that Bright Hope must not resell or "flip" the property in the

next five years.

Johnson said at one point Bright Hope and Temple University were working together, but then that deal fell through.

"Bright Hope and Temple were working together and it is become apparent to us that they did not want to work with us. We went our separate ways. If they try to put in a higher bid, then we will galvanize the community. It is unjust and it is illegal."

Several attempts to call Temple University officials were not immediately successful.

Regan Toomer writes for the Philadelphia Tribune