

# What's the solution?

We asked a number of prominent industry players what they see as the answer to the dismal rate of media ownership in the black community.



"Government should reinstitute the tax-certificate policy. That's a good first step, but you also need government initiatives to make capital available. We need bigger, more broadly based programs with more funds allocated to capital formation in minority communities."

—**Jim Winston, executive director of the National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters**



"It would take the very experienced African-American operators to have the desire to leave the larger media companies where they work today to create an entrepreneurial opportunity and buy some stations. ... You've got to have the African-American talent who are willing to do it. The talent is there, but the question is: Are those executives willing to do it? They often have to leave a great opportunity corporately."

—**Kelvin Walker, principal, 21st Century Group, a private-equity fund based in Dallas that has invested in several black-owned media companies**



"The market dynamics being what they are, it is the case that African-American and minority-owned media in general have not been able to have the same degree of capitalization of their mainstream counterparts to invest in technology to be ahead of the curve and set the space of the curve. It's a whole different reality than trying to keep up. If you get legislation to even the playing field, that will make up some ground, but you're not going to be able to take on the juggernaut of some of the bigger media companies. They are still going to be playing catch-up."

—**David Brown, president of BrownPartners, Philadelphia**



"There has to be a greater sensitivity on the part of white America to understand the necessity for us to plot our own destiny, which includes owning our own media. There are always going to be those folks who think it's a good thing that the major media is putting out something targeting our community, but that does not help to strengthen our economy. They recognize how lucrative a market the African-American community has, and consequently they want to tap into those resources as well."

—**John Smith Sr., chairman, Black Press of America**



"First, accord the shameful state of minority and female media ownership the priority it deserves at the FCC. Second, make sure that the few incentives on the books provide meaningful participation for minorities and women rather than favoring white males, as is presently the case. Third, create targeted race- and gender-conscious incentives that will really make a difference. Fourth, encourage congressional passage of a tax-certificate program to provide additional financial incentives. Fifth, do all of this *with* minorities and women, not simply for them."

—**Federal Communications Commissioner Michael Coppins**



"Media targeted to African-Americans is not valued to the degree that other media is. There is this assumption or feeling that marketers can take the African-American community for granted. I don't have to spend targeted dollars in this medium to attract that audience. That's the fundamental problem. Let's deal with the 800-pound gorilla in the room, and that is that racism is alive and well in the ad business."

—**Earl Graves Jr., president-CEO of Black Enterprise**



"I am wary of an environment where there are so few owners of African-American media outlets. I think we should always be concerned when people are discouraged to go the route of entrepreneurship. The barriers are higher in the media industry than they were before, and that requires a different kind of entrepreneurial person to get over those barriers, and the biggest barrier to entry is the access to capital. There is no shortage of ideas, but it requires a more astute and financially savvy entrepreneur than it may have 60 years ago."

—**Kenard Gibbs, publisher of Ebony and Jet magazines**