

CONGRATULATORY REMARKS BY COMMISSIONER JAMES H. QUELLO
ON INAUGURATION OF WCHB'S CLEAR CHANNEL POWER INCREASE
ST. REGIS HOTEL, DETROIT, MI
APRIL 27, 1992

I'm delighted to be back in my home town of Detroit where I spent 28 years in radio broadcasting with stations WXYZ and WJR.

I'm especially pleased and proud that my home town is the originator of a powerful 25,000 watt clear channel owned and operated by a distinguished Black broadcasting pioneer family--the late Dr. Haley Bell, Mrs. Mary Bell and son-in-law Wendell Cox.

The Bell Broadcasting Company was organized in 1953. It was the culmination of a life-long dream of Dr. Haley Bell, pioneer Black dentist of Detroit and Hamtramck, who envisioned a major radio facility conceived and established by a family in the Black community. (Other Black-owned stations existed, primarily in tiny markets, but no major market Black-owned station had been initiated from the ground up at that time.) WCHB was established as a 500-watt daytime only station in that year. Fulltime operation was added in 1961 and power increased to 1,000 watts.

The call letters were the initials of Dr. Bell "HB" and his older daughter's husband, Dr. Wendell Cox "WC" who is active in the corporation today as well as being a Detroit dentist.

Dr. Bell had long dreamed of having a "clear channel" station, noting the Black population growth within Detroit which now is about 75%. In 1964 he directed that Harold Munn, his engineering consultant, commence working on Rules changes to allow the assignment of a "clear channel" for Black station use in Detroit. With the lifting of the thirty-three-year-old "freeze" on the clear channels in 1980, application was made for the 1200 kHz facility.

In the meantime, Dr. Bell's forward look saw the need for an FM facility in Detroit, programmed to meet the needs of a jazz-loving community. The result was WCHD-FM, now WJZZ, with studios on East Grand Boulevard, established in 1960, again one of the first if not the first "top-10 market" Black-owned FM stations in the nation.

Today, the culmination of Dr. Bell's dream of a Black-owned clear channel station is realized in the WCHB 1200 facility, 25,000 watts strong, beamed over the Detroit market. The unique programming of this station represents a monument to vision, dedicated to service, and showing the way for minority participation in major media ownership and operation.

Mrs. Mary Bell has continued to head up the family-owned station, even into her 90s. Some of the grandchildren are active in the operation, while her older daughter Iris serves as a board member and consultant and Dr. Cox is active in management, continuing the family involvement.

These stations and this pioneer broadcast family have served their community with distinction. They have also presented introductory opportunities for nationally-known Black news persons, entertainers, announcers and technicians. The commencement of the 25,000 watt operation this week is the capstone completing a 39-year odyssey from little to leadership!

Your increased clear channel power is a landmark accomplishment for Black ownership in Detroit, in Michigan and, in America.

Thank you for the opportunity of participating in this significant increase in broadcast facilities. You have my very best wishes for continued success and achievement in the exciting years ahead.

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