

Testimony of

**Alfred C. Liggins III**

Chief Executive Officer

Radio One, Inc.



Hearing on “From Imus to Industry: The Business of  
Stereotypes and Degradation”

United States House of Representatives  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer  
Protection

September 25, 2007

**Statement of Alfred C. Liggins III**

**Chief Executive Officer, Radio One, Inc.**

**Hearing before the House Committee on Energy and Commerce**

**Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection**

**Hearing on "From Imus to Industry: The Business of Stereotypes and Degradation"**

**September 25, 2007**

Thank you Chairman Rush, Ranking Member Stearns, and members of the Subcommittee for allowing me to testify here today.

For those of you I have not met, let me formally introduce myself. I am Alfred Liggins Chief Executive Officer of Radio One, Inc. Radio One is currently the largest media company in the United States that primarily serves African-Americans. Our media platform includes radio, print, satellite, Internet and our nationally distributed cable channel, TV One.

Our Radio One network currently consists of 60 radio stations and can be found in 19 cities around the nation. Taken together we reach over 12 million listeners across the country. Three of our stations serve the Detroit market with music and talk formats, including the first nationally syndicated Black Talk Network. Five of our stations in Dallas and Houston provide music formats, including our innovative Contemporary Inspirational format which can now be heard on 12 FM stations across the country. The Contemporary Inspirational format can also be heard in Charlotte, where we have two stations, and Augusta, where we have five stations.

However, those numbers do not really paint the full picture of who Radio One is. Radio One takes its responsibility to serve its communities very seriously. For this reason, the content broadcast on Radio One stations is a product and reflection of the audiences we serve. We at Radio One pride ourselves on our close knit relationships with our listening audience and view them as members of our extended family. This causes us to be responsive to and engaged in the many public affairs issues facing the local communities where we broadcast.

How we serve our audiences can be summarized with two recent examples. Just within the last week two of our popular radio DJs who host shows with a hip hop format, one of whom can be heard in Dallas and Augusta and one of whom can be heard in Detroit, played an instrumental role in bringing national attention to the issues faced by six black teenagers known as the Jena 6. We are proud to say that the efforts of many of our local

radio stations to raise awareness of the Jena 6 case and organize bus caravans helped lead thousands of citizens to journey to Louisiana, including the two DJs referred to above, and played a pivotal role in making the rally for justice in Jena such a resounding success.

Also, last week, in response to the senseless violence that is currently plaguing Philadelphia, and causing the city to lead the nation in homicides, our local station Praise 103.9 organized a sold out gospel concert featuring Yolanda Adams and Les Brown at Sharon Baptist Church focusing on the theme of Black Life Has Value. We broadcast the concert live on 103.9 and also had personalities from our hip hop station in attendance to show their support for this important message.

I mention these events because they represent Radio One's commitment to our audience and are important to truly understanding who we are as a company. It is important to note that music is only one element of how we serve and entertain our listeners.

I applaud the Subcommittee, and Chairman Rush in particular, for tackling this important topic. Throughout the course of our nation's history there have been many debates and differing opinions regarding musical content, freedom of speech and what constitutes art. Some have claimed the Bible is too violent, that Mark Twain is too racist –and I am willing to bet one hundred years from now we will still be debating these important issues.

When it comes to hip hop, some may choose to focus on particular artists or music that they find objectionable and I believe that sort of debate is healthy and ultimately good for our society. However, it should be noted that hip hop music is not representative of the bulk of the content that we at Radio One provide. For instance, the vast majority of our stations do not play hip hop at all. Only a small minority, 14 out of 60 total stations, have an urban contemporary format and they play hip hop music which often reflects the realities that many in the audiences face and observe in their daily lives

Radio One is also not in charge of creating content, or in the business of censorship or determining what is in good or bad taste. However, while other media platforms do not have public interest obligations, as the members of this Subcommittee are well aware, we are regulated by the Federal Communications Commission, or the FCC. Radio One has always taken great care to comply with FCC guidelines and standards in regards to content. In fact, it should be pointed out, that of all the music platforms available to listeners today only broadcast radio is required to take steps to protect our listeners.

Furthermore, it is Radio One's policy that no song can be broadcast over the radio until it is listened to and the content reviewed. Every Radio One station has a program director who is directly responsible for the music that is broadcast on that station. Each of our radio stations receive radio edit versions of songs, which, if necessary, are further edited consistent with FCC regulations and local community standards. Our program directors participate in a conference call every other week moderated by our Senior Vice President of Programming to discuss the content of music playing on our stations.

That being said, part of the success of Radio One is based on the fact that we as a company respond to the variety and diversity of musical tastes of our audiences. If Radio One did not play hip hop music we would not be serving our audience. Radio in many ways is a reflection of its community and what its listeners want to hear. We pride ourselves on being local broadcasters, with the emphasis on “local”. It is broadcasters that offer the localism that communities need and deserve. Furthermore, while hip hop music is many different things to many different people, it is important to remember this revolutionary art form has created a multitude of opportunities and economic benefits for those who may not otherwise have had such an opportunity. Snoop Dogg’s success has allowed him to create a football league intended to attract inner city youth to football, not gangs. And David Banner has successfully used his star power to raise funds and increase visibility for the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

We at Radio One are proud of our track record and are committed to serving the needs of our diverse audience and being responsible broadcasters. Again, thank you for allowing me to testify before this subcommittee today and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.