

# Cablefax Daily™

Wednesday — January 30, 2019

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 30 / No. 019

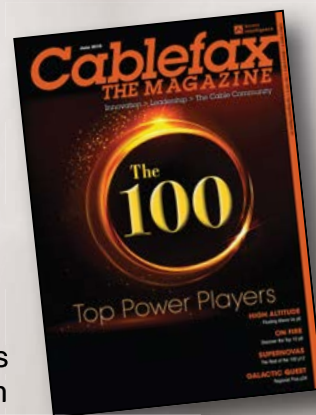
## Held Back: Verizon 4Q Mixed as Media Group Flops

It was a story of highs and lows Tuesday when **Verizon** held its 4Q18 earnings call with revenues again taking a hit from its media division. Verizon Media Group, formerly **Oath**, brought in revenues of \$2.1bln, a 5.8% drop over last year. Meanwhile, wireless continued to be Verizon's bread and butter. Verizon previously announced it saw 653K postpaid net adds in wireless for the quarter, exceeding expectations. There's still plenty up in the air with the wireless marketplace with the pending approval of the merger between **Sprint** and **T-Mobile** and the entry of companies like **Charter** to the space. The increased competition, if nothing else, is a positive sign for the wireless industry's health moving into 2019. Verizon has stayed out of the merger mayhem, instead putting its head down and barreling forward on its 5G first initiatives. Verizon's name was nearly synonymous with 5G in 2018 with the company coming out as the first to offer it as a commercial product in the US. It's an infrastructure victory, but it remains to be seen if 5G will be enough to drive Verizon to the front of the pack in the coming years. "More than any other US telecom operator, Verizon has staked its future on 5G," **MoffettNathanson** said in a research note. "But try as they might, they haven't much convinced investors that 5G is a growth story." Verizon CEO *Hans Vestberg* wouldn't reveal any details around Verizon's 5G expansion in 2019, instead emphasizing how its efforts have already moved the needle forward when it comes to the tech. "We have triggered the industry to be probably one-and-a-half to two years ahead of schedule on 5G," Vestberg said. "And we want to push that and we're holding nothing back coming out to 5G. It's more that we just need to see that the ecosystem is equally ready as Verizon is right now." Turning towards Fios, it added 54K internet customers in 4Q18, bringing the total to about 6.1 mln. The video business told a very different tale, ending the quarter with a loss of 46K subs and the year with a 168K drop. Fios remains a linear video product that hasn't been connected to Verizon's 5G efforts, and that doesn't look like it'll drop that any time soon. If anything, Verizon will add another way to watch for its 5G customers. "Initially, 5G Home has been focused on other cities than our footprint for Fios," Vestberg said. "But ultimately, we need to see that our customers have all the choices when it comes to how they want to consume the video... We need to create optionality for our customers." Looking to the rest of the year, Vestberg said he has laid out five priorities with his team for 2019 focusing on customers, financial performance, 5G leadership, its employees and creating benefits for society as a whole. That's as specific as it'll



## Who Deserves to Rank Among Cablefax's Annual Top Power Players?

The Cablefax 100 salutes the most influential executives whose leadership continues to take the industry to new heights. We will rank the top professionals in the media, cable & broadband industry and publish the list in the June edition of Cablefax: The Magazine.



**It's free to enter - but you must submit your entries by February 1!**

Enter at [www.Cablefax100.com](http://www.Cablefax100.com) | Questions: Mary-Lou French at [mfrench@accessintel.com](mailto:mfrench@accessintel.com)

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get for now, with more coming at the company’s Investor Day on Feb 21 in NYC.

**DISH Sues Univision Again:** DISH and Univision’s feud entered a new stratosphere with the satellite provider filing a patent infringement suit against the programmer. It claims Univision is violating adaptive bitrate streaming-related patents that a subsidiary of sister company **EchoStar** purchased in 2011 for \$45m. DISH claims OTT service Univision NOW, the Univision app and related services infringe on the ABS patents, saying the programmer was put on notice back in July. Univision appears to have responded to that notice by declaring it wasn’t in violation. “As we previously informed DISH, we deny that we are in violation of any of its patents. As such, we intend to vigorously defend ourselves against these claims,” Univision said Tuesday. DISH said its subsidiaries have issued licensing requests to multiple streaming services and this likely won’t be the last on the topic. “DISH is seeking to enforce its patents related to HTTP-based adaptive bitrate streaming technology that enables content delivery to adapt to the bandwidth available at any particular time, ensuring the highest possible quality content for the available bandwidth throughout the course of the stream. DISH has filed multiple lawsuits related to infringement of these patents, and additional suits are likely to follow,” the company said. Meanwhile, all Univision nets remain dark on DISH with the two unable to agree on renewal terms. Flagship channel Univision went down June 30 along with **Galavision** and **Univision Mas**. **Univision Deportes** departed the service in November. In July 2017, DISH filed suit against Univision claiming that it was in breach of contract by offering **Liga MX** games in English for free on **Facebook** Watch, while it paid for the games in Spanish on Univision Deportes. The litigation is still pending.

**At the FCC:** The FCC can’t vote on anything at its January meeting (scheduled for Wednesday, Jan 30), thanks to the impact of the government shutdown. Looking to avoid a similar problem next month, the agency moved the February meeting up to Feb 14 in case the government shuts down again. The temporary agenda features the items originally circulated for the January meeting, including transitioning to CAF Phase II auction support.

**NCTA-NAB Retrans Plan:** Comments on the NCTA-NAB joint proposal for changing the retrans consent notification process have been extended because of the partial government shutdown. Comment and reply deadlines fell during the agency’s lapse of funding. That would have meant that both deadlines would have been extended to Jan 30, per the General Counsel’s notice, but the Media Bureau has opted to further extend the deadlines. The new deadlines will be established once the notice is published in the Federal Register (30 days after for comments; 40 days for replies). Under the NCTA-NAB retrans proposal, broadcasters would no longer have to send new election notices to cable ops every election cycle unless they want to change their current status. It also would mean they could send such notices electronically. Several broadcasters, including **ION Media Networks**, **Meredith**, **Nexstar** and the affili-

## Cablefax: What’s Happening... February

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### FEBRUARY

#### Not the Super Bowl

Yes, it’s the biggest sporting event of the year, but not everyone watches the Super Bowl. Cablefax will dive into how networks are counter-programming against the mega event—and its commercials.

#### Black History Month

Cablefax will honor early African American pioneers in the cable industry—profiling those who broke barriers to launch networks, joined the C-Suite and led the industry’s innovation. This report will look at trailblazers who helped create today’s industry and also examine how cable is recognizing Black History Month on TV and within their own companies.

#### NCTC Winter Educational Conference

We head to Atlanta to hear what key suppliers are doing to help operators stand out in a crowded marketplace.

#### Sports of Tomorrow

The sports arena is changing—from streaming to legal betting to advanced technologies that put fans at the center of the action. As we head into March Madness and with MLB Opening Day not far behind, we will look at how companies are taking sports coverage into bold new frontiers.

### Awards

### Cablefax People Awards

Entry Deadline: February 22

ate associations for **ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC** have already voiced their support of the plan.

**Tech Defense:** *Sens Mark Warner (D-VA) and Marco Rubio (R-FL)* are gaining support for their bipartisan legislation aimed at combating tech-specific threats to national security, adding four new bipartisan co-sponsors. *Sens Michael Bennet (D-CO), Roy Blunt (R-MO), Chris Coons (D-DE) and Susan Collins (R-ME)* are now co-sponsoring the bill, which would create an Office of Critical Technologies & Security at the White House to develop a long-term strategy to protect against state-sponsored tech theft and risks to supply chains. Companion legislation was introduced in the House of Representatives on Jan 16 by *Reps C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD), Mike Conaway (R-TX), Jim Himes (D-CT) and Will Hurd (R-TX)*.

**State of the Stream:** Streaming numbers continue to skyrocket, with a report finding an 89% growth in overall viewing hours for the year, with a 165% growth in Q4 alone. The research comes from **Conviva**, which released its 2018 Annual State of the Streaming TV Industry report. Live content was up 65% in viewing hours and drove significant growth in viewing hours, though not at the same scale as video on demand, which was up 111% in the same time period. Connected TV viewing hours shot up by 121% and represented 56% of all streaming viewing hours for the year. vMVPDs also grew 74% faster in Q4 than publisher applications in the US, and 77% of all vMVPD viewing hours were via a connected TV. It also found a global 7% YOY increase in the rate of abandonment, translating to 14.6% of viewers leaving before their video started. The trend was especially high when facing delays in situations where they expected traditional TV viewing (connected TVs, live content) and via content aggregators (vMVPDs including **Hulu, Sling, PlayStation Vue** and **DirectTV Now**).

**Kentucky Derby:** The **FCC** fined operators of an unlicensed low-power television station in Kentucky \$144,344 Tuesday. *Vearl Pennington and Michael Williamson*, the owners of **W10BM** in Morehead, KY, operated for years after the FCC license for the station was cancelled when the two did not file a valid renewal application.

**Amazon's NFL:** This year, Thursday Night Football was available on **Amazon Prime**, and a study found that the streamer delivered an average global audience of 500K people during the 2018 **NFL** season, whereas linear TV delivered an average audience of over 14mln in the US alone. The report, released by the **Video Advertising Bureau**, also found that on average, US linear TV viewers watched the programming for 40% longer than streamers who consumed it on Amazon digital properties.

**Energetic Hearing:** **House Energy & Commerce** will hold a joint hearing with **Judiciary** Feb 13 regarding the proposed **T-Mobile/Sprint** merger. T-Mobile CEO *John Legere* and Sprint exec chm *Marcelo Claure* have agreed to testify. This is the first merger review hearing before the committee in eight years (the last time Dems held the majority in the House).

**Cable Honors:** **The Cable Center** will honor former **Cox Communications** CEO *Jim Robbins* with the 2019 Bresnan Ethics in Business Award. It will be presented posthumously at the 22nd annual Cable Hall of Fame celebration on May 2 in NYC. Robbins joined Cox in 1983 and was named pres in 1985 and CEO in 1995. During his leadership, Cox quadrupled in size. Robbins retired in 2005, passing away in Oct 2007 at the age of 65.

**News Wars:** **MSNBC** won every hour from 9pm to midnight in January with "The Rachel Maddow Show" as the No. 1 cable news program in total viewers for the 2nd month in a row, averaging 3.29mln total viewers and 606K in A25-54, compared to **Fox News'** 3.01mln and **CNN's** 1.54mln at 9pm. However, CNN topped MSNBC in all key dayparts this month among A25-54. The net pulled 235K in total day compared to MSNBC's 199K. In primetime, Fox News walked away the winner with 2.205mln total viewers, compared to MSNBC's 1.977mln and CNN's 1.214mln. And it was tops in 25-54s (244K in total day).

**Ratings:** The final numbers are in for the college football championship, and the 2019 Alabama-Clemson matchup on **ESPN** is the most watched of its three head-to-head title contests. Nearly 27mln viewers tuned in live, and out-of-home and streaming viewers added an additional 1.7mln to previously reported numbers. -- **CNN's** "Town Hall with *Senator Kamala Harris*" was the most watched cable news single candidate election town hall ever, averaging 712K among A25-54.

**People:** **Comcast** expanded its California regional senior leadership team, appointing four new vps including *Kristeen Cominiello* (vp of sales and marketing), *Jason Gumbs* (vp of technical operations), *Marcos Vicente* (vp of finance and business operations) and *Jeff Votaw* (vp of engineering). All will be based in the company's Livermore, CA, office.-- **ThinkAnalytics** tapped *Tracy Geist* as its CMO and a member of the board of directors. She most recently served as head of global product and partner strategy at **Cisco's** Service Provider Video Software and Solutions division

Special Report: Black History Month

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## The Importance of Highlighting Black History Month

Every month seems to have its own unique focus now, whether it's something as important as Pride Month or Women's History Month, or something as lighthearted as Country Music Month (which is in October). But perhaps none is more pivotal to American culture and history than Black History Month. With an intense political and cultural backdrop, this year's Black History programming looks to enlighten, embolden and entertain.

Paving the way is the **Smithsonian Channel**. On the heels of the controversial, award-winning film "Green Book," the net will give viewers a look at the real "Negro Motorist Green Book" in its doc "The Green Book: Guide To Freedom" premiering Feb 25 at 8pm. "We've been kicking this idea around for several years now. It really encapsulates the duality of the American story," *Linda Goldman*, ep of Smithsonian's documentary, told **Cablefax**. "It became necessary because of the horrific realities of racism in our country."

The doc features interviews with people who experienced first hand what it was like to "travel while black" in the middle of the 20th Century, and takes an in-depth look at the true stories behind the scenes. "It's really



Photo credit: Smithsonian Networks

**Liz Calvin & Irv Logan, grandchildren of Alberta Ellis, hold a photo of Alberta. She owned black-friendly establishments and advertised in the Green Book. 'The Green Book: Guide to Freedom' premieres Feb 25 at 8pm ET/PT on Smithsonian Channel.**

challenging to find archival footage of African Americans in our country that doesn't fit particular stereotypes. [The film shows] people on vacation, everyday footage,

THE GREEN BOOK  
GUIDE TO FREEDOM  
PREMIERES  
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Smithsonian CHANNEL

THE ESSENTIAL TRAVEL GUIDE FOR A SEGREGATED AMERICA

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people with their new cars, it's really an anecdote to what's seen or talked about," Goldman explained. "It was really exciting to be able to find that. Part of the source for that material is the archive at the African American museum at the Smithsonian. It's so much more than just the dangers of driving while black, which were very real and are definitely discussed."

Not satisfied just with airing the doc on the network, Smithsonian will continue its tradition of taking a film on the road during Black History Month. "Green Book" is headed on Smithsonian's largest tour to date, in partnership with **Comcast, Charter** and **Altice**, hitting 18 markets with 19 special screenings. "There's nothing like being in a room with other human beings and setting aside the time to watch a film and having a dialogue," Goldman said. "One of the really exciting things this year is for the first time we're going to be partnering with **Google** and **Hulu** to bring the film to their headquarters."

The first screening kicks off Jan 31 in Columbia, SC, at the South Carolina State Museum. Screenings will continue throughout the month all over the country. "We've been committed to African American history because we believe it's essential to a greater understanding of our national story," Goldman said. "The public really wants to understand our history and wants to know more. There are still things that are playing out that have roots in our past. For us this is essential to understanding a lot of the forces that are at work today, understanding

the root causes, but also shining a light on experiences that may have initially been overlooked."

Of course, Smithsonian isn't the only channel highlighting African American culture and history. **TV One** will celebrate with an homage to inspirational black women with programming highlighting its 2019 theme "Represent Change." The net kicks things off with a short-form

video campaign featuring 10 influential black women from across the country. Every Wednesday beginning Feb 6 at 9pm, TV One will air movies celebrating women behind the civil rights movement who helped influence change. TV One also just launched sister net **CLEO TV**, an entertainment and lifestyle network targeting Gen X and Millennial women of color. Its signature series "CLEO Speaks" premieres Feb 9 at 9am.

**BET** will debut drama series "American Soul" on Feb 5 at 9pm, telling the story of *Don Cornelius* and the creation of his legendary music and dance program "Soul Train." BET kicks off the month with "The 20th Annual Super Bowl Gospel Celebration" on Feb 2, with the concert returning to the net for the sixth consecutive year.

**History Channel** is celebrating Black History Month with on-air specials premiering throughout February. They include "Honor Deferred," profiling the seven African American Medal of Honor recipients, who in 1997 were belatedly awarded for their extraordinary service in WWII and "Rise Up: The Movement that Changed America," a one-hour documentary (from executive producer *LeBron James*) that explores the key battles in the civil rights movement that transformed American society—from the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955 to the Chicago Campaign which led to the Fair Housing Act of 1968. "From the leaders of the civil rights movement who forced change in America, to African American visionaries, leaders and the unsung heroes who have left an indelible impact on our culture, History is committed to sharing these powerful stories across all platforms throughout Black History Month and all year round," said *Eli Lehrer*, evp & gm of History.

**Comcast** has initiatives for the month across multiple

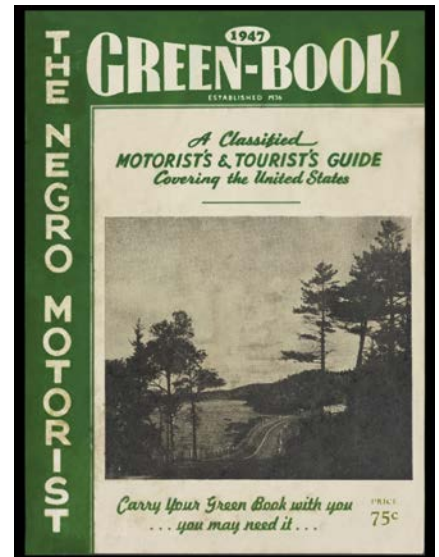
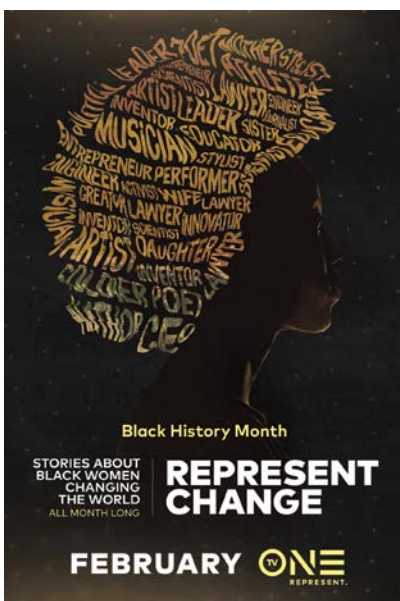


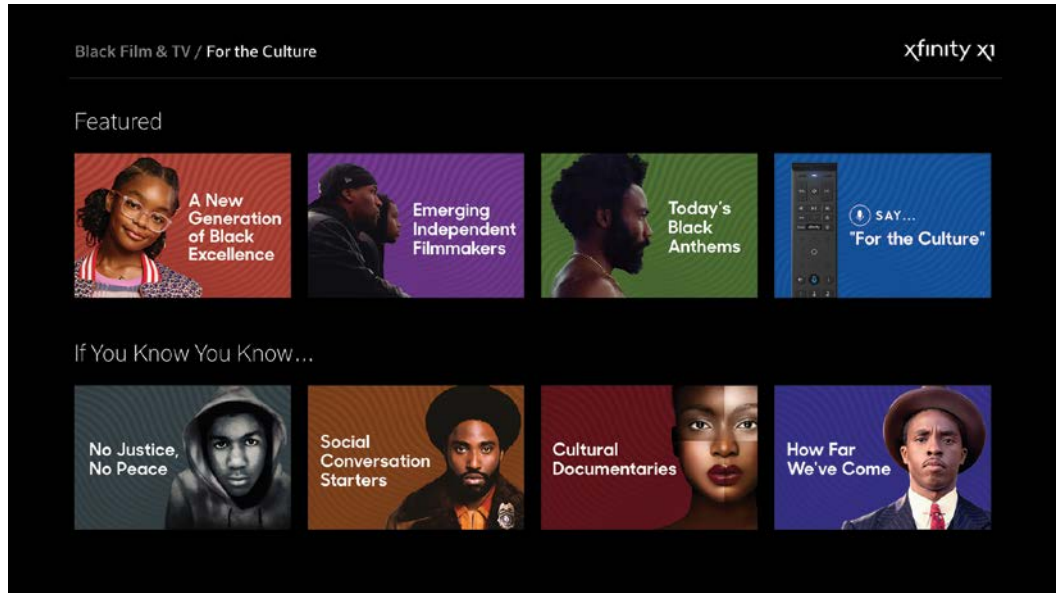
Image Courtesy of the New York Public Library



brands and networks. “We’re always thinking about what’s important to the community right now, what’s timely, what’s relevant,” said *Keesha Boyd*, the company’s executive director for multicultural consumer services. “One of the three things we’re doing is really leaning into the New Renaissance in that culture with a new permanent collection called ‘For The Culture.’ It’s content that really celebrates black culture across TV, sports, online, spoken word, digital content, short-form, you name it. It’s a time capsule for what the culture is viewing as important and relevant and timely.”

Comcast also is highlighting a different, relevant network each week with free content. Its X1 platform will feature a week of free BET network content and on demand content from TV One, **Aspire TV** and **The Africa Channel**. The entire **Brown Sugar** Video on Demand and **Urban Movie Channel** lineup will also be available to Xfinity customers for free on X1 for a week, and **HBO** fans will be able to check out a sampling of titles with or without a subscription. Comcast also continues to add to its Black History Always On collection. “The content that we’ve added is a library of content called Voices of the Civil Rights Movement. Think of it as sort of one-on-one profiles of living civil rights activists and folks that have stories to tell of moments in civil rights history,” said Boyd.

Black history is American history, but it doesn’t always get treated that way, Boyd said. “What February gives us a chance to do is reconnect, not only for the black community but for America as a whole. Look at what’s happening now, how the community is contributing now to pop culture, to music, to sports, to entertainment and politics



**Comcast has curated a selection of on demand programming celebrating black excellence in media, music, and more all month long.**

and social justice,” she said. “It’s always a nice time to just do that and give yourself permission to immerse yourself. I think the entertainment space is a really powerful place to be able to celebrate the community.”

SVODs are also leaning into the month. **Curiosity-Stream**, like Comcast, has a dedicated collection to black history. “The programs chronicle everything from the slave trade to modern African American icons,” said *Vanessa Gillon*, director of communications. “We do pride ourselves on incredible, fact-based programming and there’s certainly no category or genre that highlights that better when you’re honoring black history and African Americans in American history,” she continued. “It’s the opportunity to talk about the human experience from this perspective, people who have lived the trials and tribulations, these are really the kinds of programs we see resonate with our viewers. For Black History Month, the most important thing for us is to put the content front and center, not use it in some slick marketing promotion. It will definitely take center stage on our platforms this month.”

– *Mollie Cahillane*



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Smithsonian  
CHANNEL 

## In Their Own Words...

As part of our Black History Month coverage, we asked some African American pioneers in the industry—trailblazers who broke barriers and took the lead in innovation—to share some of their reflections.



**Mignon Clyburn**  
**Benton Foundation Board Member**  
**Former FCC commissioner/chair**

My early days in the utility regulatory space were often filled with isolation and doubt—and most of the time, those states of being did not begin with me.

It was quite common for me to be the only woman or person of color in the room. Once, I was actually told (after strongly sensing this) ‘that the only person anyone had real questions about’ (my abilities and conduct) was me. Assumptions based on preconceived notions and biases were not uncommon then and sadly were not at all surprising, but I quickly put into practice something I often say to those I mentor: I may not be able to control what you do, say or think, but I can darn sure control how I react to it.

While there are still too many conferences and panels that fail to include the best and brightest participants (which at least 50% of the time are women and people of color), and while there are companies and associations that should institute the Rooney Rule when vacancies occur, I no longer feel like that “unicorn” who came into this space in 1998. Attitudes and practices are evolving resulting in outcomes that are more optimal. We still have a long way to go, but things are much improved.

When I reflect on Black History Month, I think depending on your background, experiences and exposure, too few learn about the contributions of people of African descent, which means that they (may) assume that our contributions are few or non-existent. Some of the most significant inventions, much of the early construction and significant architecture in our communities; many of the agricultural practices and crops we still enjoy were “imported” and “cultivated” by enslaved Africans and their descendants. So we should not celebrate Black History Month by simply showing flashing cards with historic shorts and images. We should celebrate because it is an opportune time to educate and inform the unaware.

You asked me who are some of the African Americans who inspire me today. Now that is a sensitive question. My list is really long, so I will not mention a particular person (outside of my parents, of course) for fear of regretting it later. But here are the characteristics they possess: Those who look at bumps in the road

as opportunities to pause, take note, then proceed to deliberately go over them. Those who look at rejection as temporary setbacks, not forecasts of their potential for success. Those who are unselfish, who reach back to teach and share what they know to those coming up in the ranks and others who have no mentors... What I learn from people with those qualities is that if you give, help and inspire, your rewards will far surpass what you have released.



**Robert Johnson**  
**Founder & Chairman,**  
**RLJ Companies**  
**Co-Founder BET**

My earliest experience in the industry occurred when I was a government relations executive for the NCTA. The

NCTA wanted to demonstrate to a House Committee the technical ability of cable satellite to provide a diversity of programming to compete with broadcast television. To do so, we installed a large cable dish on the Capitol grounds, ran cable to the committee room and brought in a cable box and TV monitors. The demonstration went off without a glitch.

Looking back, what has changed in the industry is the tremendous advances in cable technology and content. What could be better is more diversity of content among minority groups and better cable service to the consumers’ homes. I wouldn’t do anything differently with my career path today despite how the industry has changed because by being in the cable industry in the early ‘80s, I had the opportunity to meet and gain the friendship and support of John Malone. Having that relationship, as I still do today, is something I would never want to change.

As for Black History Month, companies and television should celebrate it to show African Americans and non-African Americans the positive economic and social benefits of what can be achieved if we remember the immortal words of Dr. Martin Luther King that people of all races, creed and color should be judged by the content of their character rather than the color of their skin.

The African Americans who inspired me are the young African Americans who joined me in my crusade to create Black Entertainment Television. BET was not the result of one man; it came about because some of



the best and brightest African Americans believed in my vision and leadership and agreed to take a risk that working together, we could create the most successful African American media company in the country; and, we did.



**Rahsan-Rahsan Lindsay**  
**EVP Ad Sales & Marketing**  
**TV One/CLEO TV**

I started on the advertising agency side of the business at Leo Burnett USA and my early experiences let me know how important it was to be as prepared as

possible for meetings. In addition, I quickly learned that just because I didn't have experience didn't mean my opinion was less important. One of my early successes stemmed directly from presenting an opinion that wasn't shared by the superiors. It was an opportunity to provide cultural context and ultimately, the account lead decided to go with my suggestion. It taught me the importance of speaking up.

While I know things are changing dramatically, I probably wouldn't change anything on my career path itself. However, I would probably set up a mechanism for the industry to support people of color. We have done an OK job of getting recent grads of color into the industry, but we have done a very poor job of retaining such talent. Some of that is due to the lack of career advancement, but I believe much of the retention problem is due to the lack of day-to-day support and guidance for working through problems.

The biggest change I've seen since the early days is the availability of information at our fingertips that might have taken me a week to pull when I first started. That said, it is also more difficult to vet sources. There are far more opinions and much more data available, but not necessarily greater insights. Overall, the industry has done a poor job with diversity, yet the availability of information makes many people feel it is less important to have diverse voices in the room.

Black History Month is important because so much of the current state of US culture is a result of those who came before us. Studying black history and acknowledging the accomplishments of African Americans is critical in order to give context regarding black influence on US culture.



**Benita Fitzgerald Mosley**  
**CEO, Laureus Sport for Good**  
**Foundation USA**  
**Former WICT CEO**

Serving as CEO of WICT is one of the

most significant steps along my career journey, and I have very fond memories of the cable industry. Everyone from senior executives to local WICT chapter leaders welcomed this newcomer that had absolutely no cable experience with open arms.

There were several highlights during my 8-year tenure—launching the WICT PAR Initiative and celebrating the Best Companies for Women in Cable, creating a new brand identity that included the WICT logo and the WICT Touchstones of Leadership, and of course, presiding over eight WICT Galas. However, the most significant highlight was participating in Class 9 of the famed Betsy Magness Leadership Institute (BMLI) during my second year as WICT's CEO.

BMLI set me up for success by providing the tools I needed to be a more effective leader. Most importantly, BMLI connected me with some of the most incredible women I've ever met, who helped me assimilate into this tight-knit industry. BMLI is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2019 with over 1000 women executives having graduated from a program that has honed the leadership skills and developed lifelong friendship among some of the most talented women in the cable industry, or any industry for that matter. The amazing success of the program prompted our team to add a second class each year, so classes 38 and 39 are now matriculating through this prestigious and challenging curriculum. Kudos to an industry that celebrates and supports women's leadership at its best!



**Michael Powell**  
**President & CEO, NCTA**  
**Former FCC Chairman**

I traveled a somewhat winding road to leadership in our industry. And I've been preceded in our business by many leaders of color whom I admire

and deeply respect—Alfred Liggins and his mother, Cathy Hughes; Bob Johnson; Oprah Winfrey; Debra Lee; Jonathan Rodgers and others. They've proven that our diversity is our strength, and that our differences bring new attributes to America that can be shared, enjoyed, and celebrated by all Americans.

They were fearless, relentlessly pursuing their vision and overcoming every barrier placed in their paths. And they believed in the power of partnership, building bridges and marshaling relationships to achieve ultimate success. These lessons have helped guide me as I've taken on challenges and opportunities as the first person of color at the helm of NCTA.

When I talk today with young executives of color about some of the lessons I have learned in my own career, I urge them not to let others define who

they are. To fight to be included in the councils where decisions are made. And always, to be true to themselves. These are ways in which we can perpetuate the strides made by our predecessors, on whose shoulders we stand.

We owe our nation—which has blessed our innovation and success—recognition and commemoration of Black History Month. We do so to cherish and celebrate the breakthroughs of all the pioneers of color who stared down adversaries and broke down walls. It's critically important for our business to speak to all of America, including the disenfranchised and disadvantaged. The deployment of broadband gives us the power to touch and enrich the lives of all Americans. And the myriad content we offer builds equity and inclusion for all. We must pursue this mission, to embrace inclusiveness in our increasingly diverse society.



**Michelle Rice**  
General Manager  
TV One/CLEO TV

I started in the cable industry through the Walter Kaitz Fellowship program in an area of affiliate sales handling “special markets development” or “alternate distribution technologies.” This area of affiliate sales included anything that was not traditional fiber cable distribution. Since I was an eager newbie, I was given this tiny piece of business to develop because no one else wanted it. At the time, no one believed it would ever amount to anything, especially DirecTV or DISH. Everyone assumed customers would never nail a pizza pie-size satellite dish to the roof of their house. Moreover, these companies would never get content distribution rights from programmers, especially the broadcast networks. Well, it was great for my career that these assumptions were far from right—and the rest is history.

Back then, the cable industry was pretty decentralized. There were a lot more cable companies and a lot of the decisions were made at regional or division

offices based on the needs of the DMA. Over the years, with industry consolidation, the business has become more centralized with most key product, marketing and programming decisions made at the corporate office. While I understand the practical benefit of conforming MVPD-wide business practices to a single standard, I'm not sure a ‘one size fit all’ approach has benefited the local customer or had the best outcome on content diversity. Showcasing diverse content offered by small independent networks like TV One and CLEO TV can influence social change and influence positive learnings about the diverse lifestyles, heritages, cultures and stories.

Black History Month is a great opportunity for us to partner with affiliates, but its only one piece of a bigger responsibility to promote diversity and inclusion. Our collective responsibility is much greater than one month. I am fortunate to work at a company that honors diversity 365 days of the year. My work reflects my passion, so I wouldn't change a thing about my career path. I've had highs and lows, but each step has been valuable and has propelled me toward this moment. I believe my current role is the culmination of all of my hard work and efforts throughout the years. I am inspired everyday by our mission and lucky to lead so many smart and amazing people.

I draw daily inspiration from lessons learned from my parents and grandparents who each instilled incredible values in me—most importantly faith, family, humility and grit. I am inspired by Urban One founder Cathy Hughes as well as Tarana Burke, Kamala Harris, Serena Williams, Ava DuVernay, Oprah Winfrey and Michelle and Barack Obama. Those are names we probably all know well, but I am most inspired by the names of the women and men we are yet to know from this current generation who are unapologetically seeking justice and equity for all human beings. I am not only inspired by them, but hopeful for the future of our country and my children.

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