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Kristal Brent Zook

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I SEE BLACK PEOPLE

THE RISE AND FALL OF AFRICAN
AMERICAN-OWNED TELEVISION AND RADIO

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#2626977 in Books Nation Books 2008-02-26 2008-02-26Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.20 x .51 x 5.50l, .44 #File Name: 156025999X304 pages | File size: 16.Mb

Kristal Brent Zook : I See Black People: The Rise and Fall of African American-Owned Television and Radio before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised I See Black People: The Rise and Fall of African American-Owned Television and Radio:

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Why are so few radio and television stations currently owned by African Americans? The airwaves are public resources; they belong to the people. And yet minorities, who form 33 percent of the population, control only 3 percent of the broadcast media. African Americans own less than 1 percent of all television stations in the country. How did we reach this point? In *I See Black People*, journalist Kristal Brent Zook talks with the people who have struggled to retain an independent voice within the media despite the consolidations that have swept through the industry. Zook tells the story of Dorothy Brunson, one of the first African American women to own a radio station in America, and Catherine Liggins Hughes who faced overwhelming challenges establishing Radio One but ultimately became the first black woman in the country to own a publicly traded company. Set against these rare examples of success are people like Robert Short, who lost his Syracuse station in 2000 and describes the negative impact that this had on his local community. And Chauncey Bailey, who made it his life's work to bring local African American programming to Oakland, California, but was tragically murdered earlier this year while working on a story. *I See Black People* makes a powerful case that ownership does matter. When the media fails to reflect the diversity of its audience, it is inevitably the voices of the least powerful that vanish first from the airwaves.

From Publishers Weekly Zook (*Black Women's Lives: Stories of Power and Pain*) introduces a diverse cast of characters in this interview-based history of African American media ownership. Some made millions, others struggled until being forced out of the industry, but all offer important insight into the decline of African American media ownership. In a time when giants like Clear Channel are quashing small operators and the FCC has discontinued affirmative action, many of Zook's subjects have defied steep odds. James L. Winston, executive director of the National Association of Black-Owned Broadcasters, sets the tone by talking about the establishment of the Minority Tax Certificate, a major tax incentive for media owners to sell their businesses to minorities which was repealed in the 1990s. Dorothy Edwards Brunson, the first African American woman to own a radio station, speaks about media consolidation and the business acumen it takes to succeed in the industry. In the introduction and her perceptive questions, the author helps articulate the importance of black ownership as well as any of her subjects and the compilation of these interviews creates an important story. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. About the Author Kristal Brent Zook, Ph.D., is an associate professor of journalism at Hofstra University and an award-winning contributing writer with *Essence* magazine. She is the author of *Color by: The Fox Network at the Revolution in Black Television* and *Black Women's Lives: Stories of Power and Pain*. She lives in New York City.