## Community Media at Its Best

The Tom Joyner Morning Show is a national community radio show that focuses on the African-American community. It can be argued that the Tom Joyner Morning Show (TJMS) is radio at its best because it is one of the best establishments in its African-American entertainment market. “Talk radio is known for the political views of its host and listeners, but few entertainment orientated programs are as politically active as the TJMS.” (303) It is clear that the TJMS’s success is due to its political activity, powerful entertainment, and extensive news coverage it has. An urban station that should follow some of the practices by the TJMS is 103.9, WDKX which is located in Rochester, NY. The station is a huge part of the Rochester community and culture.

The problem WDKX has is that although the station is already extremely community orientated they need to be a bigger activist for cultural, Rochester, and national issues facing urban communities and more importantly the black community. If they fail to solve this problem then the people of Rochester will not have a good platform for their issues to be thoroughly addressed. The people of Rochester and all of the WDKX fans nationwide who listen online to the station will be robbed of diversity in entertainment and culture. If the station became more active in community development and politics then they can become as successful as the TJMS, which reaches more than 8 million people-nearly one in four African-Americans. (300) WDKX has the potential to be as successful as the TJMS but cannot mirror the TJMS formula on the same level because the station does not have the resource.

The TJMS crew pledged $1 million of their own money to award $1,000 scholarships o 1,000 displaced college students. By mid-October, they gave out $2.4 million. (302)

There are specific issues of the city of Rochester that operate as a manifestation of the larger socio-cultural issues facing black America. First, theoretically African-Americans are underrepresented andare negatively portrayed in the media. If WDKX created much more programming that promoted successful students, residents, and activist within the city of Rochester then WDKX would greatly reverse negative presentations by the media of African-Americans. Secondly, Residents are not rewarded for doing well. WDKX can increase their fan base, community activism, and influence on the community simply by giving out community awards. Thirdly, WDKX could work out Issues of the city of Rochester youth and the city as a whole issues Africans-Americans throughout the country are not solved that are not solved, such as the high incarceration rate of black men or lack of opportunity and safety. Lastly, African-Americans are heavily influenced by musicians and celebrities; therefore they need to hear and see them giving a positive message.

These theoretical issues of underrepresentation, negative presentations of African-Americans through the media, lack of recognition for success, and too much influence from uncensored entertainers can be fixed by WDKX locally but not national because they do not have the resources. The article, “The Tom Joyner Morning Show: Activist Urban Radio in the Age of Consolidation” recommends combating these issues on a theoretical level. The article suggests creating blogs, giving scholarships, and having remote broadcast. Overall it is wise for WDKX to increase their activism efforts because it has worked so well for the TJMS and it is important to give the people of Rochester a platform for their issues and successes to be displayed.

Since WDKX already has consistent blogs I suggest making the blogs more interactive and highlighting good within the Rochester community. Most of the blogs concerning the city were reports of murders, to fight against social stigmas WDKX needs to have more positive blogs. The article reported each month the TJMS features a different historically Black college or university and awards scholarships to students attending that institution. For this reason the show is very popular and gets a lot of support from sponsors and cooperate donations. WDKX would have the same fate because people in power and with money want to help their local communities and they want to be seen doing it. In other words, people and companies want to give charity and support to make them look good and it has been this way since the beginning of time. To solve issues facing Black America WDKX needs to increase the amount of remote broadcast they do to be seen more by the community as activist. WDKX does quite a few remote broadcasts but they are for promotion of the station mostly. WDKX needs to have many more remote broadcasts specifically aimed at activism efforts. The TJMS normally have several live broadcasts in front a large audiences and featuring a national recording artist or group. When they do this crowds of 3,000 attend the morning show’s event which is called Sky Shows. At the Sky Shows the TJMS have activism efforts such as voter registration and a 24hr voter registration phone hotline to register via phone. WDKX needs to host events similar to the Sky Show at a smaller scale and have activism efforts at these events.

The station needs to have concrete plans to solve their issue of lacking activism efforts. I suggest starting with their blogs which are universally free and are accessible for city residents. The station should promote their blogs that affect the Rochester community on air so people who wouldn’t normally read the blogs online are attracted to the blog and listeners will notice the station’s activism efforts. The blogs should have more positive content and be more interactive. All WDKX radio personalities should promote the station’s activities events and efforts because it is free and easy promotion. WDKX’s Facebook page should promote the blogs more also to heighten the blogs popularity.

I believe WDKX needs a whole new public relation campaign geared toward activism so that there is big change in the stations brand. To accomplish this WDKX needs to collect video footage, sound bites, and testimonials to create DVD, radio package, online material to promote WDKX‘s activism efforts. Other actions WDKX need to take so that their efforts are seen in the community are to ask the community how they can serve the community in campaign aids, online, and meetings, this way the stations efforts are very clear. WDKX should campaigns in which they host events for cultural and society movements. My Suggestion is to start off with an annual Stop the Violence March. WDKX should try very hard to hold family activities and seminars during and/or around the time of music concert and have celebrities make appearances and/or host seminars. This will solve the theoretical issue of African- American youth being greatly influenced too much by music and celebrities. Ounce a large celebrity or entertainer is in town WDKX needs to do their best to have them make an appearance at least in order to have their activism efforts get attention.

WDKX should have activism efforts at the station and on the radio air waves. For starters, have PSA that pertain to the Rochester city, which is another opportunity for more localization, which is WDKX’s marketing niche. The station needs to have different segments on their popular morning show, The Water Cooler. The TJMS has segments that promote the good in the black community, which is something WDKX needs to solve its problem of lack of activism. The TJMS has the “Little known black fact” a segment that highlights facts of African-American history and “Christmas Wish” is a segment of the show that gives gifts to listeners throughout the year. WDKX should create feature stories like the TJMS, and make them into podcast if they do not have air time for them to be played. The TJMS has the “Real fathers Real Men” and “The Thursday Morning Mom,” both of these features recognizes mothers and fathers who affect their families and communities in positive ways.

The strongest suggestion that I have is for WDKX to create a community advocacy and activism group ran by members of the Rochester community. The name of the group should be clear and concise so that the group is remembered and their purpose is clear. I advise is something along the line of *The WDKX community club.* The purpose of the club would be to promote community involvement and development. *The WDKX community club* would have regular meetings, have a interview process to make club more exclusive and build the clubs hype, and monitor the club’s members community activism and award the best members at an annual ceremony.

The type awards for the club would be made of cheap paper and nice plaques for end of the year celebration. These types of awards are very feasible and rewarding. If possible WDKX should give away discounted or free group tickets to amusements parks, to local attractions, and events. Also a possible award for being an avid member of the club is a few VIP passes to concerts that WDKX sponsors. Other benefits of being in the club should be WDKX Community Club teen parties and WDKX Community Club old school parties because old school R&B music is a big part of the stations old school brand. Because the station has limited resources WDKX would have to get sponsors for food, donations, and support. To make this easier I advise that WDKX give discounted commercial slots to sponsors. The station would also have to get volunteers to help at events and have volunteers cater and organize events.

The solutions to both the theoretical and concrete problems WDKX faces need to be implemented to progress the development of urban communities. Issues of the urban and Africa-American community will be thoroughly addressed. African-Americans would be less underrepresented and seen more in a positive light instead if the negative image the media creates of African-American. Also, people of the Rochester area would break away from entertainers and celebrities and not allow them to dedicate how they live their lives. Too many people try to live the life style of their favorite rappers, entertainers, and celebrities. “For a participatory democracy to function, citizens must have access to the resources necessary for meaningful participation.” “As media play crucial roles in preparing citizens for active participation in democracy, the TJMS, as a vibrant participant in the public sphere, strengthens our democratic society” (306) Community radio is important because it enriches the area and is a platform for the community to address issues it is facing. Community radio bridges communities together by being one source for entertainment, commendatory, and togetherness.