

For Immediate Release
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November 8, 2007

The FCC Just Can't Say No
Despite Clear Violations, The Federal Communications Commission Renews Clear Channel Licenses

[OAKLAND CA]

More than a year after petitioning the FCC to deny the licenses of four local radio stations owned by Clear Channel, Bay Area communities got their answer. Despite legal challenges against 106.1M KMEL, 94.9FM KYLD, 92.3FM KSJO, & 910AM KNEW filed in 2005 by local media activist groups the Youth Media Council and Media Alliance that documented the arrest and conviction of local shock jocks for illegal pranks targeting communities of color and low-income families, and claimed that progressive voices were denied air time and that the stations failed to provide news to communities of color and meet basic public interest obligations - FCC Commissioners renewed the broadcast licenses of all four stations. Owned and operated by Clear Channel, one of the largest media companies in the world, these Bay Area radio stations are among thousands whose broadcast licenses are renewed through a process some say is a rubber stamp instead of a thorough inspection of the station's ability to meet the needs of their listening audiences.

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The Youth Media Council, a Bay Area membership-based media strategy and action center for youth rights and racial justice, filed the license challenges as part of a larger campaign to increase and improve the representation of local artists and progressives on the air. The FCC decision to renew the stations' licenses came swiftly on the heels of an announcement by FCC Chairman Kevin Martin last week that he will push through an overhaul of telecommunication rules that will remove the remaining limits on corporate media ownership in key media markets, as well as allow a media company to own both newspaper and broadcast outlets at the same in a given market. These new media rules, fast tracked by Martin will, according to the Youth Media Council, have as devastating an impact on media diversity as the 1996 Telecommunications Act which allowed media companies like Clear Channel to go from owning 46 radio stations nationwide to over 1200 in only one year. Youth Media Council Organizer Michele Gutierrez believes cross ownership of this kind will narrow public debate and decrease the diversity of voices and perspectives with access to the public's airwaves. "The Bay Area is the fifth largest media market in the country. If we can't even get the FCC to hold media companies like Clear Channel accountable now, even when they violate the law, how will we hold them accountable after the FCC gives them more power to own even more with less regulation?"

Author of the new book Total Chaos: The Art And Aesthetics of Hip-hop Jeff Chang says, "The KMEL protests were a big part of a swelling national backlash in urban communities against the shock jocks, autopilot programming, and mind-numbing hype of their radio stations. Many have begun calling it a movement for media justice."

Organizers of the Unplug Clear Channel Campaign say they are disappointed by the ruling, but that it was expected and they are bolstered by the final official hearing on media consolidation occurring this Friday in Seattle where all five FCC Commissioners will hear testimony on the impacts of media consolidation on local Seattle residents and businesses. According to radio host, hip-hop personality and media activist Davy D, one of those testifying at the Seattle hearing, "This is a real fight. Media control is a viable weapon in today's war. At this stage in the game we have to take a stand so we're on record. We have to hold corporate media accountable and throw wrenches into the system. But we also need a long-term vision for investing in the media that strives to serve our community needs."

The Youth Media Council is an Oakland-based member-driven media strategy and action center dedicated to creating a collaborative movement for racial justice and youth rights. Launched in 2002, the YMC builds the power of grassroots movements and disenfranchised communities to transform public debate and media policy in the service of justice. For more information, visit us at www.youthmediacouncil.org.

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