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Black News Channel's Chairman J.C. Watts Discusses BNC's Deep HBCU Ties & FAMU Partnership

Posted on [June 4, 2019](#) by [hbcumoney](#) |

In a recent interview with Bold TV, Chairman of Black News Channel, J.C. Watts, discusses his plans for the coming launch of the new television channel that seeks to focus on a myriad of topics from culture, religion, politics, economics, and more that cover the diverse range of African America's views on topics. Chairman Watts emphasizes that this will be a channel for African Americans and by African Americans. Just how far that is to go though we will discuss later on in the article.

Starting at the 8:50 mark in the video, Chairman Watts discusses with Ms. Sheffield, Founder of Bold TV, the important relationship that Black News Channel will seek to build with HBCUs and just how much [content](#) there is available within those institutions alone. A statement that should be not underappreciated given that BNC is going to attempt to be a 24/7 news channel. While the plan a few years ago was for BCN to be housed on the campus of Florida A&M University, the company has shifted its focus on making the FAMU School of Journalism a target school for BCN with internships, curriculum engagement, and employment opportunities upon graduation.

The company features a host of Rattler alumnae. Mr. Amir Windom, a rising star in media circles will be the Director of Creative Services. It also features Ms. Georgia Dawkins, who will serve as Director of HBCU Services. Lastly, the Director of Corporate Business Development is Ms. Erika Littles.

Ms. Sheffield brings up just some of the larger outlets in the landscape that currently stands in African American targeted media like The Root, Black Entertainment Television, NBC Black, OWN, TV One, and questions aloud where BCN will find its place among the field.

However, a point that was not brought up and should always be at the forefront of our minds when new products are launched that target African America is who actually is profiting from our eyeballs. We are often providing the labor and the viewership in many instances while reaping none of the economic rewards that comes with ownership and ultimately the control of the narrative. BET is owned by Viacom, NBC is owned by Comcast, The Root is owned by Univision, which itself is owned by very Eurocentric private equity firms, and even OWN, the

channel beloved by Oprah followers, is majority owned by Discovery Communications. On the website for Black [News](#) Channel, while Chairman J.C. Watts is listed as a co-founder, the other co-founder is Bob Brillante. What is the potential ownership split? There are seven other owner/investors listed on the company's website, but what each individual's stake is remains unclear. As a private company, they are certainly not required by any means to disclose this information, but it would certainly go a long way to endorsing just how much of an African American "owned" media asset this actually is.

There is a harsh reality that the majority of sizeable media assets focusing on African Americans is not in the ownership hands of African Americans. The Washington Post reported that in 2013, "African American [ownership](#) remains particularly low, hovering at less than one percent of all television properties, and less than 2 percent of radio." This is certainly not to say that Black News Channel will not have an impact. It is projected to employ almost 100 people, many of them being HBCU alumni and students as we have already seen in key positions, but we must push the envelope further. We need more investment in publications that are owned by our community like HBCU Digest, Atlanta [Black](#) Star, HBCU [Gameday](#) and many others. Traditional media is not dying, it is evolving (and consolidating into the hands of a few) and has already done so in major ways. Unfortunately, we are often lacking the resources to keep up despite our ingenuity.

We appreciate that the Black News Channel makes it a point to be transparent about their ownership, hope that they will be an inclusive platform to smaller African American owned publications looking to establish themselves, and definitely continue to integrate itself within the many schools of journalism that HBCUs have and the richness that those assets can bring to the table.