



NEWS

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STATEMENT BY FCC COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS
ON THE PASSING OF PERCY E. SUTTON

With the passing of Percy E. Sutton, New York City has lost a preeminent leader. Mr. Sutton was known to New Yorkers, and particularly those in his beloved Harlem, as a lawyer, civil rights leader and the long-serving Manhattan Borough President. Yet it is his role as a broadcaster and media entrepreneur that represents a larger, and perhaps, more lasting legacy for the nation at large. When Sutton and others purchased radio station WLIB in 1971 it became the first Black-owned radio station in the New York City metropolitan market. Under his leadership, WLIB aired news, information and cultural programming of interest to the Black community in the number one media market in the country. At long last, local communities of color began to find broadcast programming that reflected their unique needs and interests. Sutton went on to purchase WBLS in New York, and several other radio stations in various markets to form his media company, Inner City Broadcasting. His stations gave voice to African American concerns in numerous local communities, and provided opportunities for minorities seeking employment in the broadcast industry. Sutton's pioneering Inner City Broadcasting became the model upon which others have worked to build successful broadcast enterprises.

Although Percy Sutton's life should be celebrated for all his many and diverse accomplishments – Tuskegee Airman, political leader, and one-time owner of the famed Apollo Theatre – it is his legacy as a local broadcaster that I will always cherish. At a time when minority ownership of broadcast stations has reached woeful single digits, I trust we will remember the legacy of Percy Sutton and the importance of diversity in media ownership. I hope also that we will re-dedicate our efforts to improving ownership diversity of media outlets so that they will truly reflect the rich cultural diversity of all our nation's citizens.