



Q+A

## DuJuan McCoy TV Station Owner

*The Indy native made his fortune in Texas, but returned to purchase WISH-TV and WNDY-TV this year. We talked with him about the national networks, the threat of streaming, and the need for a new kind of reporting.*

INTERVIEW BY SUZANNE KROWIAK

**YOU'VE BEEN AWAY FROM INDIANAPOLIS FOR A WHILE. WAS IT ALWAYS IN YOUR LONG-TERM PLANS TO COME BACK AND BUY TELEVISION STATIONS HERE?**

No, I didn't have any plans to buy in Indianapolis. I didn't know these stations would become available. But in March 2019, I was approached by the previous owner (Nexstar Media Group) to participate in the bidding process, and I won the bid. So I was lucky enough to come home and own television stations in my hometown.

**AT A TIME WHEN STREAMING SERVICES AND OTHER CONTENT PLATFORMS SEEM TO BE GETTING ALL THE ATTENTION,**

**YOU'RE DOUBLING DOWN ON TRADITIONAL BROADCAST TELEVISION. WHY?**

Broadcast television is the only free, high-quality content in America. When you look at TV ratings, there are two main drivers for all platforms—live local news and live sporting events. So with WISH and WNDY, I have the best of both worlds. With WISH, we have 75 hours of local news content every week. And on WNDY, we have a lot of local sports. What viewers want is information about their local communities. It hasn't changed since I've been in the business, and I don't see it changing moving forward.

**THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS HAVE BEEN FAMOUSLY HARD ON LOCAL NEWSPAPERS WHEN IT COMES TO AD REVENUE. HAS THE BROADCASTING BUSINESS SUFFERED SIMILARLY IN THIS NEW CONTENT ENVIRONMENT?**

No, I haven't seen a drop-off in ad sales, and I don't expect one. Video will always be king. I've been in broadcasting since 1989, and that was around the time of the cable revolution. Everyone said cable would knock off broadcasting. Then the internet came around. Then Netflix came around. And I've got to tell you, broadcast is still on top. When you look at the ratings for all of the viewerships in Indianapolis, the numbers are highest for broadcast TV. Live, local television stations are lifelines for communities.

**NEITHER WISH NOR WNDY ARE AFFILIATED WITH ONE OF THE FOUR NATIONAL BROADCAST NETWORKS (ABC, CBS, NBC, AND FOX). WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THAT FOR YOU AS AN OWNER?**

The only difference between a non-affiliated news organization and a Big Four-affiliated news organization is that you're connected to a national news organization that can support you on a national basis. They provide very little support locally. As an owner, I like strategizing, maneuvering, and growing my own news product in a market. As I said, at WISH-TV, we produce 75 hours of local content per week and we're one of the highest-rated news organizations in the market. Since I'm not affiliated with one of the Big Four networks, that means I own 100 percent of the rights to my product and I can do whatever I

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want with my news content. That's a freedom I enjoy.

**ONE OF THE FIRST ANNOUNCEMENTS WISH MADE AFTER YOU BOUGHT THE STATION WAS THE CREATION OF A MULTICULTURAL REPORTING POSITION IN THE NEWSROOM. DO YOU THINK LOCAL TELEVISION STATIONS IN GENERAL HAVE DONE AN ADEQUATE JOB REPORTING ON AND REFLECTING THE DIVERSITY OF THE COMMUNITIES IN WHICH THEY OPERATE?**

I believe stations have done a fair job, but I think there's an opening for better and more inclusive reporting in the multicultural arena. I don't mind taking the lead on that. One reason I wanted to create this position was not just to report on what's happening in these communities locally, but to educate viewers on multiculturalism in America.

**WHAT WOULD BE AN EXAMPLE OF THE KIND OF STORIES YOU HAVE IN MIND?**

Let me put it this way—it won't be "Johnny shot Billy" or murder-of-the-day stories. It will be stories to educate folks on other people's cultures. If there's something positive going on in the Hispanic community that needs attention outside of Hispanic Heritage Month, we're going to cover it. If there's something happening in the Chin community that warrants attention, we're going to cover it. It will be educational stories that are newsworthy.

**IN 2008, YOU BOUGHT SEVEN TELEVISION STATIONS IN TEXAS AND BECAME THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN TO OWN AND OPERATE A NETWORK AFFILIATE OF THE FOX BROADCASTING COMPANY. WHAT DID THAT MEAN TO YOU?**

At the time, I didn't think, *Hey, I'm going*

*to be the first at this or second at that or whatever.* I just bought the stations because I thought they were good business opportunities. Once people pointed it out to me, I thought, *That is kind of cool.* And when you become the first of anything, people are going to watch every little move you make. So that became a responsibility, and I knew I had to carry the baton proudly.

**YOU'VE TALKED IN THE PAST ABOUT YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE BROADCAST LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS. YOU WERE A TRAINEE IN 2007, AND NOW YOU'RE A FACULTY MEMBER IN THE PROGRAM. HOW DID THAT EXPERIENCE IMPACT YOUR CAREER, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU TO STAY CONNECTED TO IT NOW?**

That program taught me how to buy television stations. It was what was missing in my career. I had the ambition and the drive, but not the know-how to own a station. The class opened my eyes and taught me how to do that, and put me at the pinnacle of broadcasting. That's why I try to help others who are qualified to get where I am. Somebody opened the door for me, so it's my responsibility to pay it forward.

**WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR CIRCLE CITY BROADCASTING, THE PARENT COMPANY YOU CREATED FOR WISH AND WNDY?**

I want it to be the home of the strongest news stations not only in Indianapolis, but in the state. And I want to positively impact as many people as I can. For me to be able to come back home and own a news station *and* a sports station—the drivers of local viewership for all media—is a wonderful thing. **B**