

# CATHY HUGHES

*Founder & Chairwoman. URBAN ONE, Inc.*



Cathy Hughes is a dynamic, media pioneer who demonstrates the power of one – one woman, one vision, one company - Urban One. Her unprecedented career has spawned a multi-media conglomerate that generates original content across the spectrum of radio, television and digital media. Urban One, Inc., formerly known as Radio One, is the largest African-American owned, diversified media corporation in the nation. It reaches more than 80-percent of the African-American market through its subsidiaries: Radio One, an urban market leader with over 55 broadcast radio stations; TV One and CLEO-TV, two cable television networks; Reach Media, Inc., a syndication company that produces the “D.L. Hughley Show” among others; iOne Digital, a digital platform that offers social content, news, information and entertainment; and One Solution, a cross platform marketing company. Hughes’ humble beginnings in Omaha, Nebraska, were not a deterrent to her success but rather part of the catalyst that fueled her ambition to empower African Americans with information and to tell stories from their perspective.

Hughes began her radio career in her hometown of Omaha, Nebraska, at KOWH (AM), a station owned by a group of African-American professionals. In 1971, she moved to Washington, D.C., and became a lecturer in the newly established School of Communications at Howard University. During her tenure, she served as General Sales Manager at WHUR, Howard University Radio, increasing the station’s revenue from \$250,000 to \$3 million in her first year. She also became the first woman Vice President and General Manager of a station in the nation’s capital and created the format known as the “Quiet Storm,” which revolutionized urban radio and was aired on over 480 stations nationwide. In 1980, Hughes purchased her flagship station WOL-AM, in Washington D.C., and pioneered yet another innovative format - “24-Hour Talk from a Black Perspective.” With the theme, “Information is Power,” she served as the station’s morning show host for 11 years.

In 1999, Cathy Hughes became the first African-American woman to chair a publicly held corporation, following the sale of more than seven million shares of common stock to the public. Along with her son and business partner Alfred Liggins III, she grew what was then Radio One into a multi-media company that became an urban radio market leader with more than 60 stations across the country comprised of hip hop, R&B, gospel and talk radio formats. It became the first African-American company in radio history to dominate several major markets simultaneously, and Hughes became the first woman to own a radio station that was ranked number one in a major market. Radio One diversified and launched the television network TV One in 2004 and entered the digital space with Interactive One, now iOne Digital, in 2007.

As a result of her success, Hughes has earned hundreds of prestigious awards and recognitions. They include: induction into the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) Broadcasting Hall of Fame in 2019, the naming of Cathy Hughes Boulevard in her hometown of Omaha in 2018; the 2018 Lowry Mays Excellence in Broadcasting Award; the naming of the Cathy Hughes School of Communications at Howard University in 2016; the ADCOLOR Lifetime Achievement Award; the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Chair’s Phoenix Award; the NAACP Chairman’s Award; the Giant of Broadcasting Award; the Uncommon Height of Excellence Award; the Essence Women Shaping the World Award; the Ida B. Wells Living Legacy Award; and induction into the American Advertising Federation Hall of Fame.

Cathy Hughes’ philanthropic work is on par with her success in the business arena as well. Hughes is a champion for the homeless, a mentor to countless women and an advocate dedicated to empowering minority communities. Her passion for education is evident in her efforts to continue her family’s work and legacy at The Piney Woods School, established by her grandfather in 1901, in Piney Woods, Mississippi. The Piney Woods School is the longest standing independent boarding school in the United States that was established for the education of African-American students.

