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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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August 28, 1998

William Kennard
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street-NW,
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Mr. Kennard:

I am writing to urge the Federal Communications Commission to end its prohibition of radio stations that broadcast at frequencies below 100 watts. As a creative artist, I believe that this policy denies the First Amendment rights of free speech and freedom of the press.

I am aware of three recent cases in which the FCC has taken action against radio stations whose broadcasting frequencies are under 100 watts. In 1991 in Decatur Illinois, the FCC removed the Black Liberation Radio station from the air, and police arrested and jailed its founders. On June 16, a ruling by federal Judge Claudia Walker prohibited Radio Free Berkeley, a 60-watt station in Berkeley, California, from broadcasting. Oral arguments in this case are scheduled to be heard this coming Friday in San Francisco. Last week, the FCC notified Mr. Lorenzo Ervin, founder of the Black Liberation Radio Station in Chattanooga, Tennessee, that he faces arrest and possible seizure of his home unless he stops broadcasting. The operators of these radio stations have been accused of broadcasting without a license. The FCC does not issue licenses to radio stations with less than 100 watts of power. How can people be arrested and prosecuted for breaking a law that does not exist?

I, along with other African American friends, who are writers, artists, musicians, and actors, who have formerly, and still do patronize Black owned publications, is particularly disturbed by the FCC's treatment of the Black Liberation Radio stations. The actions against these stations come at a time when the Corporation for Public Broadcasting has severely reduced its funding of many Black owned and oriented licensed public radio stations. The FCC's prohibition of the Black Liberation Radio stations, along with the CPB's actions, is undermining the Black presence on the radio airwaves of America.

These stations and Radio Freee Berkeley provide their local communities with news, information and entertainment that might not otherwise be available. They are part

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of a long tradition of alternative media which comprise a distinct part of American life and culture. The FCC tarnishes this tradition by denying broadcasting rights to people who lack the financial resources to operate commercial radio stations with powerful signals. As long as the FCC continues this policy, there can be no true freedom of speech and freedom of press in the United States.

Sincerely,

A Group Of Concerned Afric-
an American citizens

P.O. Box 408443,
Chicago, IL. 60640