

## *Help The AAUF Restore Cable Access T.V To Our Community*

### **AAUF Vision & Mission**

Most if not all African-American organizations in Akron lack the resources to publicize our missions, activities, services, campaigns, concerns and even existence. In an effort to address this problem the AAUF is calling upon you and your organization to assist our community in overcoming the digital divide and claiming our space in the mass media. The AAUF is promoting a campaign to restore and enhance cable access television to the African-American community and greater Akron. At stake is nothing less than our ability to speak to each other at the mass level and to build effective and lasting unity.

The AAUF has a goal of mobilizing a cross-section of African-American organizations to assist in this Campaign. We especially seek those groups that possess the ability to develop and sustain a cable access television program that will serve our community. We seek programming from a diversity of organizations addressing issues involving public education, physical and mental health, economic development, criminal justice, political education, youth development and culture etc. To achieve this goal will require unity and a sustained effort to secure our rights.

### **Summary of Federal and Local Cable Access Law/Guidelines**

Congressional legislation passed in the 1980s and administered by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) guarantee community access to the mass media including radio and television. The law empowers local governments to enter into a contract with the local monopoly cable company for the purpose of administering the service and safeguarding the rights of the people. In 1983 the City of Akron and Time Warner Cable entered into a 25-year Cable Communications Franchise Agreement.

This Agreement is clear that **“the Company shall assist community service organizations in developing programming for presentation on Community Service Channels.”** In addition, the Agreement specifically requires that **“the Company shall conduct scheduled community programming workshops for interested residents of the City...[and] shall make available a studio in the City of Akron for the production of local origination and community service programming.”** Unfortunately, these services are not being provided in the City of Akron.

In April 2005 Akron City Council, in cooperation with the Mayor, implemented an ordinance permitting Time Warner Cable to charge a \$25 fee for each hour of programming submitted for airing. The Franchise Agreement states **“charges, fees or deposits, if any, for the use of Community Service Channels shall be regulated by the City of Akron....”** The ordinance also permits Time Warner Cable to ban any programming not produced in Akron however beneficial the content. These restrictions have had a devastating impact on the African-American community’s ability to air our programs on cable access channel 15, especially our churches. There has been a drastic reduction of programming of all types. Music Choice audio takes up a sizable percentage of the daily programming time that should be educating and serving our community.

### **What Is To Be Done?**

The AAUF has approached the African-American Leadership Committee (AALC) with a request that it lead the campaign to restore cable access television to our community. The response has been positive but not conclusive. The AAUF will be contacting local organizations to join this campaign to put pressure on the City and Time Warner Cable to provide this essential service to Akron. The AAUF will also facilitate the production of a pilot television show designed to promote this campaign on cable access channel 15. If you and/or your organization are willing to assist with this campaign please contact the AAUF at