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# The Daily Free Press

The Independent Student Newspaper at Boston University

 MENU

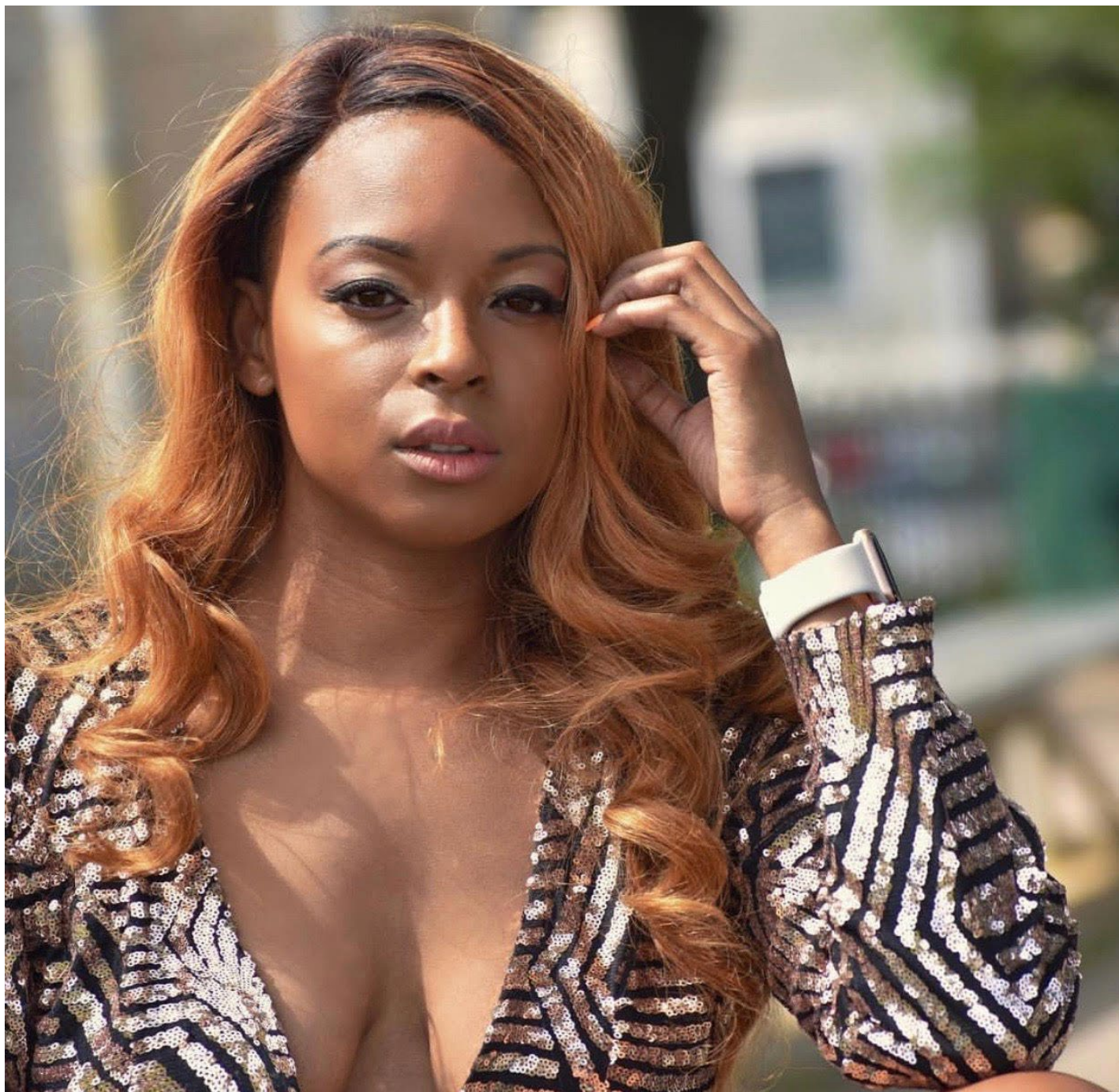


**CITY, NEWS**

## Boston's first black female-owned radio station to launch in April

January 21, 2020 11:57 pm

by [Angela Yang](#)



*Boston-based radio personality Danielle Johnson will launch Spark FM, the first digital radio station owned by a black woman this spring, which she hopes will be a platform for people of color. COURTESY DANIELLE JOHNSON*

Boston radio show consumers will soon find a unique new voice in the local industry. Spark FM is the first all-digital radio station in Boston owned by a black woman, catering specifically to local interests within the urban black community. It will launch April 20.

Boston-based radio personality Danielle Johnson first dipped her toes into radio in 2009. Since then, she has found herself navigating an industry dominated by big media.

“I saw the need for a platform that actually caters to the demographics that are oftentimes overlooked and under-represented

from the bigger names in media platforms,” Johnson said.

Red tape around the hiring of new artists at major stations is what often inhibits diversity, according to Johnson.

“It’s really hard to get that urban voice in there that actually has a foot on the ground in the local community,” Johnson said. “There’s not a lot of resources that the urban community knows about that can help them with generational wealth, local politics, community events and engagement volunteer opportunities and all of our entertainment.”

Johnson said she had applied several times to iHeartMedia, one of the largest mass media platforms in the country, with no success. After having spoken to various people working with the platform, she said she discovered that entry was “almost impossible” unless somebody was retiring or moving.

This problem is not exclusive to Johnson. Other radio personalities and small artists share the experience, she said.

“We have a lot of different entertainers in Boston that are not being able to get on the platform that they need to kind of increase their social footprint,” Johnson said, “and to give them the credibility that they deserve to kind of reach in different places.”

Johnson said she aims for Spark FM to serve as a stepping stone for these entertainers to get the eyes they need to boost their careers. The station will also offer opportunities to local businesses unable to afford the larger platforms.

“We want to kind of give them a place where they can advertise their business to the local community,” Johnson said, “and kind of circulate the black dollar back into the community in which it would be needed.”

Jennifer Gaskin, president of the Worcester Caribbean American Carnival, is working closely with Johnson to bring a Worcester-centric show onto Spark FM. Gaskin said the station will be the first to represent the Caribbean-American community in central Massachusetts.

“When you look at the supply for urban radio stations, we’re not really a demographic that they focus on,” Gaskin said. “Whereas with Spark FM, we’re bringing in people from the community to be on the radio and really talk about what things are relevant to them.”

Johnson said Spark FM’s content will cover a range of topics with local relevance, spanning anything from municipal politics to music culture in Boston. The station plans also to promote resources in the city that could benefit residents — such as labs in Roxbury and Dudley where aspiring entrepreneurs can network and participate in programs.

Another priority, according to Johnson, is teaching listeners how to accumulate generational wealth through understanding their spending power, improving their credit and purchasing real estate.

Dorchester resident Helen Keller, 27, said the station idea interests her.

“I would definitely listen to something like that, like on my commute to work,” Keller said. “I do think it’s something that should be promoted and people should listen to it and share with other people.”

Chris Hoye, 27, of Beacon Hill said he doesn’t usually listen to the radio due to the limited selection of content available.

“I don’t think the outlets I usually go to operate on the radio, so it tends to be dominated by a few voices and stations,” Hoye said.

Jackie Taylor, 54, of Dorchester said he thinks it would be great to have more diversity in radio, and that the local angle makes it relevant.

“I think the content would be helpful to the community that [Spark FM] is looking to reach,” Taylor said, “and for everyone in general.”



**Author: Angela Yang**

## 57 Comments



**Robin Flounory**

January 22, 2020 at 3:34 pm

Congratulation on your new endeavor I wish you nothing but luck but you don't need it what you are about to do the Boston and the surrounding community is awesome. And the fact that you are a woman number but a black woman makes this accomplishment for all women. The fact that we have a platform where our issues and concerns can be heard and discuss is fanatics and we owe it all to you so congratulation my sister I look forward to listening to you in the coming months. May God continue to bless everything you touch.



**Danielle**

January 27, 2020 at 12:35 pm

Thank you so much!! ❤️

Please join our mailing list to stay sparked up for upcoming events, updates, and the Grand launch in April!

Sparkfmonline.com

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**Alda Witherspoon**

January 22, 2020 at 8:17 pm

Congratulations Ms. Johnson. Aim High!



**Danielle**

January 27, 2020 at 12:35 pm

Thank you so much!! ❤️

Please join our mailing list to stay sparked up for upcoming events, updates, and the Grand launch in April!

Sparkfmonline.com

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**Alina Lopez Thomas**

January 22, 2020 at 11:01 pm

Congratulations! This is much needed and I'm excited for this venture .



**Raphael George**

January 23, 2020 at 6:37 pm

Ms. Yang,

Unfortunately your reporting is incorrect. WILD-AM 1090 was once owned by Bernadine Nash, a black woman. Then years later WBOT FM 97.9 was owned by Radio One, the largest african american owned radio group in America, headed by Cathy Hughes



**Daily Free Press Admin**

January 23, 2020 at 7:34 pm

Hi Raphael, thank you for your comment.

According to our rigorous reporting, Ms. Johnson's station will be the first all-digital station owned by a Black woman, not the first in general, as we stated in the lede. Thank you for acknowledging the important work of women like Nash and Hughes, whose efforts made stations like Johnson's possible.

I hope this clarifies some things.

-Victoria Bond, Editor-in-Chief Spring 2020



**Jannet Brown**

January 23, 2020 at 12:04 am

CONGRATULATIONS!! NUBIAN SISTER QUEEN! GOD BLESS!



**Angela Higginson**

January 23, 2020 at 3:40 pm

Awesome move for Danielle!!



**Cindy**

January 23, 2020 at 4:34 pm

This is great news for lovers of black music and culture in Boston. About time!



**Kathleen**

January 23, 2020 at 12:30 am

Congratulations! Finally in my lifetime!

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**Andrea Swain**

January 23, 2020 at 6:15 am

Congratulations! Thank you for providing a voice and a platform for the voiceless. I look forward to listening to Spark FM.

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**Bernadine B. Kirkland**

January 23, 2020 at 6:41 am

Awesome news! Congratulations Queen.

This is great for Boston.



**Paula**

January 23, 2020 at 11:49 pm

Looking forward to follow Spark FM. Congratulations!

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**Sandra Redish**

January 23, 2020 at 6:46 am

Congratulations! Embrace & Enjoy

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**Carlotta King**

January 23, 2020 at 7:26 am

So proud of you ❤️

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**Delores**

January 23, 2020 at 8:00 am

Congratulations to you and best of luck. I will be listening!!! Make us proud!!!!

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**Valerie Simpson**

January 23, 2020 at 10:23 am

Congratulations- and Blessings

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**Cynthia Hargrove**

January 23, 2020 at 10:24 am

This is so overdue..so many have tried and have been unsuccessful. Da Block Records(Ronald Hargrove/Neeko Brown) have been grinding for this avenue for years and have been shut out...I wish spark FM the best on there launch... I can't wait !!!

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**Henry Wilson**

January 23, 2020 at 11:11 am



Congratulations hopefully I will be able to receive your radio station in Chelsea Ma . All the best to you.

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**Tracey Souza**

January 23, 2020 at 11:51 am

Congratulations Be Proud ❤️❤️😎.

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**Leah M.**

January 23, 2020 at 1:14 pm

AMAZING, CONGRATS SISTAH!!!

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**Boston SweetzModelingAgency**

January 23, 2020 at 2:40 pm

Congratulations this is so exciting

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**Gina woods**

January 23, 2020 at 2:42 pm

Congratulations to you Sis 🎉🎉🎉

Definitely a Big Move. We need this in the community. Can't wait.....

It's been years since we had a good station like

(WILD)

With that said #DanielleJohnson #SparkFm #OwnedByFirstBlackWomen



**Michele**

January 23, 2020 at 2:58 pm

This is wonderful. How do we find out about advertisement rates?



**Danielle**

January 27, 2020 at 12:29 pm

Hi Michele currently as a reward for donating to building Spark FM we have advertising packages built into our Kickstarter campaign. You can find the link here: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/sparkfm/spark-fm> thank you for the support!



**Ana Smith**

January 23, 2020 at 3:01 pm

Congratulations I wish you success. You are opening doors that needed to be open and you are making history !



**Joan Rogers -Hatcher**

January 23, 2020 at 3:46 pm

Greatness ! Congratulations and good luck!

I will definitely listen.



**Superior Race**

January 23, 2020 at 4:21 pm

Much Success & Blessings!

#SuperiorRace

#TeachEntertainment

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**Lorraine Harris**

January 23, 2020 at 5:25 pm

Thank God, welcome how can I be apart of this radio station Ms. Harris/ poet.

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**Donovan Longmore**

January 23, 2020 at 6:29 pm

Such a great accomplishment. Congratulations young lady. We'll connect soo.

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**Kyle**

January 23, 2020 at 6:55 pm

Hopefully everyone is n this post will also support Ms. Johnson by asking their Dr., Dentist, Architect, Dry Cleaner... To advertise on Spark FM. This station will need revenue to support operations and talent acquisition. Best wishes for a successful endeavor.

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**Natasha L**

January 23, 2020 at 7:25 pm

Congratulations can't wait



**Lawanda Lewis**

January 23, 2020 at 8:33 pm

Congratulations I Celebrate your journey!!! I support your success totally.



**Maday Lopez**

January 23, 2020 at 10:01 pm

Congratulations 🎉 Boston Born, I want to say that you are an inspiration for many in this community. I hope one day to be interviewed by you!!!!



**Bobby Williams**

January 23, 2020 at 10:49 pm

Congratulation I am hoping and praying and pushing hard to do exactly the same thing here in my hometown you are definitely a inspiration and I will continue to follow you and even try to get some advice from you again congratulation..



**Willamae Burnett**

January 24, 2020 at 5:31 am

Bringing Power to Boston. Congratulations.

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**Lisa**

January 24, 2020 at 6:14 am

Congratulation my sister may God bless you and your family and many years and radio shows invoice come your way  
congratulation God bless my sister

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**Lianna**

January 24, 2020 at 7:41 am

This is a much needed move in the right direction to diversify and elevate the urban communities towards empowerment!  
Congratulations and looking foward to this listening platform.

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**Althea**

January 24, 2020 at 8:09 am

Congratulations! I wish you all success!

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**Gina Knight**

January 24, 2020 at 8:22 am

Congratulations!!! Wishing you all the best on your new journey! Blessings

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**Sandi Robinson**

January 24, 2020 at 9:12 am

I have been trying to get a Black owned Radio Station going since WILD departed but was shot down at every corner. I love it!! I have worked in Black radio for over 30 years would love to talk to you! Please contact me. Finally, someone is getting serious and of course a woman. Reachout soon.



**Danielle**

January 27, 2020 at 12:31 pm

Please email me [sparkfmonline1@gmail.com](mailto:sparkfmonline1@gmail.com)

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**Just me**

January 24, 2020 at 9:58 am

Big up and nuff blessings in your endeavor. Sounds like what they are doing in NYC with <http://www.IrieJamRadio.com>

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**Anthony "Tone" Morgan**

January 24, 2020 at 3:03 pm

Congrats !! I look forward to the experience. As a fellow entrepreneur I look forward to also supporting your endeavors to reach the community.

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**Thylas Moss**

January 24, 2020 at 5:46 pm

wish i still lived in Cambridge. Good luck with this wonderful opportunity, and it's about time, anyway.

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**Gary Marion**

January 24, 2020 at 11:07 pm

Best wishes Queen!

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**Victoria Williams**

January 24, 2020 at 11:49 pm

Congratulations and God bless!

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**Mark Evans**

January 25, 2020 at 10:34 am

Congratulation Ms. Johnson on you venture as a Venture Capital firm we will like to sit down and talk to you regarding adverting on your station. We will be following up with you.

Best Regards.



**Danielle**

January 27, 2020 at 12:32 pm

Hello! Please feel free to contact me at [sparkfmonline1@gmail.com](mailto:sparkfmonline1@gmail.com)

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**Richard Amirault**

January 25, 2020 at 5:04 pm

Not mentioned in the article, and not one person asked in the comments ...

Who will be able to listen to this, and where?

Is this “digital radio station” only going to be streamed on the internet?

Or is it going to be a sub-channel on an existing HD FM station?



**Victoria Bond**

January 25, 2020 at 8:34 pm

The station will be all-digital and available to anyone with access to the internet, but will not be launched until April 20. There won't be a way to access it until then.



**Stella**

January 25, 2020 at 10:26 pm

Danielle Johnson, I am a Bostonian that moved to NC recently. I am so thrilled that you have succeeded in launching your radio station. This will bring the community together in so many ways. This is community communication sharing common interest, celebration, struggles and United strength base because of the voice you have created. So proud and happy for my people in Boston. I didn't realize I was waiting to exhale until I saw this article. I totally support you. AND THANK YOU for all you are doing!



**schneidz**

January 27, 2020 at 2:52 pm

congrats. we're proud of you.

will the programming have a video component.

facebook-live and youtube-live offer 360° video streaming which i always feel would work well in a radio studio environment.

**Jay**

January 27, 2020 at 2:57 pm





This is super important. I have major beef with iHeartMedia. I'll be sharing this with everyone I know. I have a lot of demographic knowledge and a bit of radio experience, please let me know of anyway I could be of assistance and where I can follow you. You can contact me at [jjarred@ymail.com](mailto:jjarred@ymail.com).

Congratulations, Ms. Johnson!



**Walter Fox**

January 28, 2020 at 11:04 pm

I hope that your station will be online so it can be received in St. Louis and other parts of the country.



**Zeke Perkins**

January 30, 2020 at 8:15 am

Nice to have a station for the area and would like to be station transportation company

*What would you like to see The Daily Free Press cover? Let us know on our [tip line](#).*

## LATEST OPINION

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