



## Media Minutes

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Producers: Stevie Converse, Candace Clement & Megan Tady

### TRANSCRIPT

#### Digital Justice for Detroit

In Detroit, Mich., hundreds of community organizations and individuals across a wide spectrum of issues and interests have formed the Detroit Digital Justice Coalition. The groups will collaborate on projects with the overriding theme of communication as a fundamental human right. The coalition, formed just one year ago, has been awarded approximately \$2 million in federal stimulus funds, in partnership with Michigan State University, to support community organizing and economic development.

Lottie Spady is the assistant director of one of those organizations – the East Michigan Environmental Action Council. She said the groups had worked together before officially forming the coalition.

**Lottie Spady:** *There have been a lot of efforts at bridging the digital divide in Detroit, a lot of funds have come through the city. But there were some concerns around at what point was the community actually involved in shaping the way that technology was going to be implemented and used.*

With a goal of creating a media-based economy in the city, the project will create 12 public computer centers and train digital media educators and entrepreneurs from the community in wide range of skills, like film, radio, graphic and Web design as well as music, poetry and visual arts. Professional teacher development and after-school programs for high school students are also part of the plan.

**Lottie Spady:** *Typically, what has happened all too often with community development and nonprofit work in the city of Detroit is that there is a lot of competition around grant dollars, and folks tend to work in silos around their issues or around their organizational programs.*

This approach will weave a new economic fabric for the city, says Spady.

**Lottie Spady:** *We're not going to look for the auto industry, the one, slap a green cover on it all, do green jobs, you know, do a film industry. It's not going to be just one track*

*that going to bring the city a better infrastructure and a foundation that can provide our residents with a livelihood, an ongoing means to support themselves. So we're trying to do this model, illustrate cross-pollination between issues and how important it is that, in the environmental justice movement, the food justice movement, the recognition of the role that media plays in that, how it supports, how it shapes the narrative, how it shapes the attitudes, values, behaviors and beliefs about any particular issue. So, they all have to be strategically and intentionally combined.*

## **Super Wi-Fi Using White Spaces**

A team of professors at Rice University in Houston, Texas is pioneering the one of the first projects in the country to use “white spaces” to bring high-speed Internet to their community. Since 2004, Rice has been partnered with the non-profit Technology For All to provide free Wi-Fi to a test-bed of 4,000 users in an underserved area of East Houston.

Thanks in part to a \$1.8 million grant from the National Science Foundation, the team is now hoping to use newly unlicensed digital TV spectrum, called white spaces, to create a super Wi-Fi network: a faster, longer reaching and potentially less expensive wireless connection. White spaces have the ability to penetrate buildings, while Wi-Fi signals are easily disrupted, even by trees. Rice University Professor Edward W. Knightly is spearheading the project.

**Edward Knightly:** *Users know with Wi-Fi, whether you're in a hot spot or your home network, that you go one or two walls away and the signal has attenuated too much. So they will be just delighted to see the new type of coverage they can get.*

Knightly says that white spaces have the potential to bridge the digital divide in the U.S. and create low-cost Internet for communities whose members are traditionally priced out of purchasing broadband service.

**Edward Knightly:** *Today's unlicensed bands are viewed as these small islands. The potential here is that now you've just got blanket coverage areas, because with a relatively few access points with white spaces, you can cover large areas.*

Knightly said Internet users across the country should be excited about the potential of white spaces and the new path this 5-year project is creating for the future of the Internet.

**Edward Knightly:** *What we're exploring in the underserved communities is that there are users who don't have access or who have access in limited cases, for example school children who only have access during school hours or go to a library. And then there's the mobile professional who just wants always available access anywhere for their mobile device, for their laptop, for their car, just to always be connected.*

To find out more information, visit [www.techforall.org](http://www.techforall.org).

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