

Proposed Combination of Comcast and NBC-Universal

**Testimony of Alfred C. Liggins, III
Chairman, TV One**

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Chairman, TV One, LLC

Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today on the pending joint venture between Comcast and NBC Universal (NBCU).

There is one simple truth that should govern our thinking about the joint venture between Comcast and NBCU.

General Electric -- which has had a controlling share of NBCU since 1986 -- is selling its interest in NBCU. The acquiring company could be a partially-owned foreign firm or one with little experience in television or management of far flung assets. It could be a company that has no appreciation for the value of diversity or no demonstrable track record in diversity whatsoever. Happily, that will not be the case - GE has chosen to work with Comcast.

There are some critics of the Comcast/NBCU deal. They generally argue that "big is bad" and insist that this combination cannot possibly be good for those concerned about diversity or competition in media.

I have an alternative view based on my own personal experience with Comcast at both the highest executive and operational levels. Based upon my eight year relationship with Comcast, I can offer a personal testament to Comcast's commitment to TV diversity.

Eight years ago, I began to pitch the idea of a new cable television channel that would provide real entertainment and education to the African-American community -- television that assumed the audience's intelligence, instead of insulting it. Programming that would inspire, uplift and educate. Programming that would allow the African-

American community to see itself as it really is, but also would allow our fellow citizens to see us, too, unfiltered. Our goal was to create the nation's only African-American controlled and operated programming service, given that BET's founder had long ago sold off his network.

For the most part, cable operators granted me polite audiences to pitch carriage on their systems, but then ultimately turned me down as occurs with most programmers these days. There was one exception. Brian Roberts, Steve Burke, David Cohen and the senior leadership team at Comcast seemed to "get it" right from the start. Comcast understood the value and importance of their African-American customers and quickly agreed to become our major strategic partner. They gave us significant exposure on their cable systems, which helped to create momentum with advertisers. They also negotiated a deal that helped finance the network, made a sizable cash investment while allowing my team to retain significant ownership, even in excess of Comcast's ownership stake, ceded management control and worked with me to allow a competitor, DirecTV, to acquire an interest in the network. And, it was with great pride that we launched TV One on January 19, 2004, the day that the nation paid tribute to Martin Luther King.

Today, as one of the nation's two major African-American-oriented channels (and the only one owned by African-Americans), TV One now reaches more than 50 million homes by cable and satellite. We deliver a wealth of original programming designed to delight, inform and intrigue millions of African-American adults. By staying true to our original vision, we've expanded our viewership to reach adults of all races and creeds so that they, too, can see us as we see ourselves.

I think it's significant that Comcast showed this commitment to diversity when its core business was in *distribution* rather than *production* of television. And, now that they are joining forces with NBCU, they have committed in writing to do even more to promote diversity.

Some may have concerns about GE's stewardship of NBCU. That is not something for which Comcast should be held accountable. Rather, that is something for which Comcast can be the solution. Because of my personal experience working with Comcast, I am confident that if allowed to acquire NBCU, Comcast will look for opportunities to create managerial and content diversity.

Mr. Chairman, I know the men and women of Comcast, as I know you do. I believe they are a good, solid company that has been and will continue to be responsive to the needs of our communities.