

= Let 's Stay Together (30 Rock) =

" Let 's Stay Together " is the third episode of the fifth season of the American television comedy series 30 Rock , and the 83rd overall episode of the series . It was directed by co @-@ executive producer John Riggi and written by co @-@ executive producer Jack Burditt . The episode originally aired on the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) network in the United States on October 7 , 2010 . Guest stars in this episode include John Amos , Todd Buonopane , Reg E. Cathey , Queen Latifah and Rob Reiner .

In the episode , Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) must appear before Congress to discuss NBC 's merger with the fictitious company network KableTown (a parody of Comcast) . He hopes that he will charm celebrity members for the deal to go through , but one Congresswoman (Latifah) demands more diversity in the NBC programming lineup . As a result , Jack enlists Tracy Jordan (Tracy Morgan) to come up with some new development ideas . Meanwhile , Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) , the head writer of the fictitious sketch show The Girlie Show with Tracy Jordan (TGS) is fed up with the criticism her writing staff gives her , and finally Jenna Maroney (Jane Krakowski) helps Kenneth Parcell (Jack McBrayer) reapply in the competitive NBC page program .

This episode of 30 Rock was generally , though not universally , well received among television critics . According to the Nielsen Media Research , it was watched by 4 @.@ 90 million households during its original broadcast , and received a 2 @.@ 1 rating / 7 share among viewers in the 18 ? 49 demographic .

= = Plot = =

NBC executive Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) attends a Congressional hearing in Washington D.C. regarding the Kabletown @-@ NBC merger deal . He is able to consolidate support for the deal , until Representative Regina Bookman (Queen Latifah) calls out NBC for being racist and demands that there be more diversity in the programming lineup . Following the hearing , Jack goes back to New York and asks Tracy Jordan (Tracy Morgan) and " Dot Com " Slattery (Kevin Brown) to produce a program for the African @-@ American community . Dot Com suggests a show called Let 's Stay Together , about an African @-@ American family in the 1970s , but when Grizz Griswold (Grizz Chapman) suggests that a talking dog be added to the show , Tracy orders Dot Com to incorporate it into the rewrite , much to Dot Com 's dismay .

Meanwhile , Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) , the head writer of the sketch show TGS with Tracy Jordan , is unhappy about the lack of respect she gets from her writing staff and complains to Jack , her boss , about the situation . Jack asks her if staff writer James " Toofer " Spurlock (Keith Powell) can be promoted to co @-@ head writer in an effort to diversify NBC . Liz accepts , seeing this as an opportunity for someone else to get the lack of respect and complaints she does . She gets upset , though , when Toofer gets a television interview as head writer , and insists that she herself should also be there as she is co @-@ head writer . The two appear on Rutherford Rice 's (Reg E. Cathey) talk show Right On , a show aimed toward African @-@ American audiences . Liz gets visibly upset when Rice gives Toofer all of the credit she deserves , and as a result of her behavior she is escorted off the set by a security guard .

At the same time , Kenneth Parcell (Jack McBrayer) , a former NBC page , is back at NBC and wants to reapply to the page program , but notes that it has become a pageant . When Jenna Maroney (Jane Krakowski) hears of this , she volunteers to help him win the pageant using her own pageant experience . Jenna treats Kenneth as her mother Verna (Jan Hooks) treated her during her pageant years . After a failed , over @-@ the @-@ top performance in front of Human resources mediator Jeffrey Weinerslav (Todd Buonopane) , Jenna vows to get Kenneth his job back . She goes to Jack to ask him for his help , and Jack orders Jeffrey to hire Kenneth back .

When Representative Bookman makes an unexpected visit to New York , Jack tries to show NBC 's commitment to diversity , but is thwarted when Bookman sees signs next to two bathrooms that read " Colored " and " White " that were really intended for the paper recycling bins that had been removed only moments ago , and Jeffrey informing Jack and Bookman that the minority slot in the

page program was filled by Kenneth . Jack tries to improve the situation by giving " head writer " Toofer a medal for his work , but Bookman sees right through this , and discovers that Liz is the only one that truly deserves her respect , and congratulates her . After more grandstanding , Bookman tells Jack she will vote no on the Kabletown @-@ NBC deal unless he gives her reason not to . The episode ends with a taping of the Let 's Stay Together rewrite , including the talking dog .

= = Production = =

" Let 's Stay Together " was written by co @-@ executive producer Jack Burditt and directed by co @-@ executive producer and staff writer John Riggi . This was Burditt 's thirteenth writing credit after " Jack Meets Dennis " , " The Baby Show " , " The Fighting Irish " , " Cleveland " , " Rosemary 's Baby " , " Subway Hero " , " Sandwich Day " , " The One with the Cast of Night Court " , " St. Valentine 's Day " , " The Ones " , " Kidney Now ! " , and " Don Geiss , America and Hope " . This was Riggi 's fourth helmed episode , having directed " Goodbye , My Friend " , " The Problem Solvers " and " The Moms " . This episode of 30 Rock originally aired on NBC in the United States on October 7 , 2010 , as the third episode of the show 's fifth season and the 83rd overall episode of the series .

In September 2010 , it was announced that actress and singer Queen Latifah would guest star on the show as a Congresswoman named Regina Bookman who demands from Alec Baldwin 's character , Jack Donaghy , more diversity in its NBC programming lineup . Latifah is a fan of the show and big fan of Baldwin and series creator , executive producer and lead actress Tina Fey . She said in an interview she was " out of my mind " excited to guest star . Latifah is due to appear in a future episode of 30 Rock . In addition , it was also confirmed that actor / director Rob Reiner would appear as himself , and in " Let 's Stay Together " he played a Congressman . Michael Ausiello of Entertainment Weekly reported in August 2010 that the show set a casting call " for an African @-@ American male in the 30s @-@ 60s age range " to play a fictitious host named Rutherford Rice , a well @-@ spoken host of Right On , a fictitious talk show focusing on African @-@ American issues . In this episode , Rutherford Rice was played by actor Reg E. Cathey , best known for his role on the HBO drama The Wire as Norman Wilson . Actor John Amos made a brief appearance in the episode in which he stars in one scene from the Let 's Stay Together show alongside a talking dog named Stanley the Dog . This was actor Todd Buonopane 's fourth appearance as the character Jeffrey Weinerslav , an NBC Human resource mediator . Buonopane previously appeared in the season three episodes " Believe in the Stars " , " Cutbacks " , and " Jackie Jormp @-@ Jomp " .

In an August 2010 interview , co @-@ showrunner and executive producer Robert Carlock was asked if the series would continue to make reference of the real @-@ life acquisition of NBC Universal by cable company Comcast ? which occurred in November 2009 ? to which Carlock replied that their version of the acquisition was in the " works " . Carlock noted that the NBC @-@ Comcast deal would not change the show 's " reason for existence " , explaining that since the merger has occurred it has made things " even funnier " for the staff writers . " To us it 's great , we 've been able to do our version of ' ripped from the headlines , ' which a lot of comedies don 't get to do . " In the episode , Representative Bookman called out NBC for being racist in regards to its programming lacking diversity . This subplot was based on real @-@ life in which Jeff Zucker , then @-@ President and CEO of NBC Universal , who attended the House Judiciary Committee hearing in February 2010 in discussions of the NBC @-@ Comcast deal , was asked by United States Representative Maxine Waters why the NBC network had not attempted to create shows that would appeal to the black community .

= = Cultural references = =

In the beginning of the episode , Liz tells Jack that her writing staff have been replacing her name @-@ plate title with various names including " F. Krueger . " She explains that the name refers to a time in which she got a chemical peel , wore a red and green sweater with a fedora . This is a

reference to the fictional horror villain from the A Nightmare on Elm Street series Freddy Krueger 's appearance . During the hearing in Washington D.C. , Representative Rob Reiner says " The acclaimed director of When Harry Met Sally ... would never do that ! " , a reference to Reiner who directed the 1989 romantic comedy When Harry Met Sally

One of the applicants to become an NBC page plays a keyboard and sings in the tune of musician Billy Joel 's 1989 song " We Didn 't Start the Fire " . After returning from the hearing in Washington , in which Representative Bookman accused NBC of being racist , Jack tells Liz that during the hearing he did not pay attention to Bookman 's heartfelt speech as he was too busy trying to remember the name " of the black kid on Community " , a reference to actor Donald Glover who stars in Community ? another NBC program ? and who Jack is referring to . In addition , Glover was a former writer on 30 Rock . Coincidentally , guest star Queen Latifah executive produces the romantic comedy television series Let 's Stay Together that airs on BET .

30 Rock and Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip ? both of which debuted on 2006 ? 07 NBC lineup ? revolved around the off @-@ camera happenings on a sketch comedy series . The first season episode " Jack the Writer " contained a self @-@ referencing walk and talk sequence , which was commonly used on Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip and Sorkin 's previous series The West Wing . In this episode , the walk and talk sequence is seen here in which Jack , before departing to Washington , has a discussion with Liz .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Let 's Stay Together " was watched by 4 @.@ 90 million households , according to the Nielsen Media Research . It received a 2 @.@ 1 rating / 7 share among viewers in the 18 ? 49 demographic , that is 2 @.@ 1 percent of all people in that group , and 7 percent of all people from that group watching television at the time , watched the episode . This was a decrease from the previous episode , " When It Rains , It Pours " , which was watched by 5 @.@ 688 million American viewers .

Andy Greenwald of New York magazine called " Let 's Stay Together " a " pretty great episode for a show that ... seems to have gotten its groove back . " Television columnist Alan Sepiwall for HitFix who enjoyed the previous week 's episode as he believed the show was back in peak , noted that the show " was back to more uneven , but still funny , territory " with this episode . Sepinwall felt that parts of the episode " worked just fine " , and enjoyed Liz 's disastrous appearance on Right On . He , however , did not like Jenna and Kenneth 's pageant story . A contributor from The Huffington Post said the episode had a " ton of hilarious moments " , and that Queen Latifah " was the highlight of the show " . Vanity Fair 's Juli Weiner enjoyed Maulik Pancholy 's appearance as Jack 's assistant Jonathan , writing that Jonathan is " perhaps the most underutilized character on the show , and we were happy to see him get some screen time this episode . " Further in her recap , Weiner said " Thank you , Jenna and Jack , for mercifully putting an end to the tension @-@ less Kenneth 's @-@ rehiring narrative . " Meredith Blake from the Los Angeles Times deemed it a " wildly clever and satiric episode " that also " delivered an important critique about the limitations of diversity programs . " Blake said that Jane Krakowski 's Jenna was on fire in " Let 's Stay Together " . Scott Eidler of The Cornell Daily Sun commented that the show has always dealt with racism issues " pretty well " and that the issue featured here " was no exception . " Bob Sassone of AOL 's TV Squad reported that " Let 's Stay Together " was one of his favorite episodes of the season , and that it was a " massively pleasing episode . " Caitlan Smith of The Atlantic wrote that Latifah " stole the show " and " drove the action " as her character Regina Bookman in this episode of 30 Rock .

The A.V. Club 's Nathan Rabin called this episode " clumsy and tired " , explaining it was " misfiring on all cylinders . The satire was toothless , the playing strained and the whole enterprise reeked of mild desperation . " He continued in his recap that " Let 's Stay Together " had a " golden opportunity to comment insightfully and hilariously about the tricky intersection of politics , power , race and privilege " , however " it recycled jokes that were unfunny and overly familiar the first time around " . In conclusion , Rabin gave it a C grade rating . Brad Sanders of the Indiana Daily Student opined that the show 's writing " is still sharp ? not ' as sharp as ever , ' but sharp ? but a lot of the

most interesting plots have already played out , and a lot of the new plots aren 't interesting . " Sanders said that the stories featured here had " a few big laughs ... but they 're assembled so haphazardly and put into such a bulky framework that the train just never gets enough steam to salvage the episode . "