

Comments presented to Federal Communications Commission  
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Good morning. My name is Dr. Carolyn Byerly. I am a member of the communications faculty at Howard University. I conduct research on women and minority ownership, and on the ethnic minority news audience, among other things.

Our nation has before it both a civil rights and women's rights crisis in media ownership. Our failed federal communications policy has enabled those with great wealth and power to buy and control more than 90% of our public airwaves. These powerful owners have a narrow demographic: They are nearly all male and all white. This predicament of gender and racial inequality in ownership is discriminatory on its face.

Let me share with you some of the effects at the local level.

In research we conducted in Washington DC neighborhoods last year, we found that:

- Residents believe local television news ignores things they need most to know about – these things include neighborhood redevelopment, lack of jobs, lack of healthcare, and public safety. They said reporters only come into their neighborhoods when there's a crisis, and the reporters don't understand their issues or know their leaders.
- We also found that Black radio listeners prefer African-American owned stations – they said these stations “know what's going on,” and “tell me the truth.”

My current research on women broadcast owners is still underway but two early findings are worth sharing:

- First, women owners emphasize that they are committed to providing *local* news. Thus, we conclude women's ownership fulfills an essential *local* public interest.
- Second, women owners say they strive to hire and mentor other women. We conclude that preserving women's ownership is vital to giving other women an entrée into the industry.

The Commission has the power and the responsibility to address the survival and growth of women's and minorities' ownership in the broadcast industries through its policy making.

I urge you *not* to further deregulate an already flawed, deeply undemocratic concentrated market.