

# Preserving Equal Opportunity Online

## Traditional Media Are Not Meeting the Needs of People of Color

People of color and civil rights groups have fought for a place on the TV and radio dial for decades. Yet because of media consolidation, little of what is seen and heard in the traditional media today is produced by people of color. And when mainstream media do report on issues affecting people of color, they often fall short, failing to provide a wide range of viewpoints or a greater understanding of communities of color.

The reality is that media consolidation has made the barriers to entry for media ownership by people of color practically impossible to overcome. It's rare for programs produced by people of color to be distributed on traditional media outlets, and big media companies are typically unwilling to fund programs of interest to people of color.

**Only 7 percent of licensed radio stations are owned by people of color, and only 3 percent of full-power commercial television stations are minority-owned. The outlook is just as bad on cable, where consumers pay exorbitant monthly bills to access the few minority owned channels available.**

## The Open Internet Provides All People an Opportunity to Be Heard

The open Internet provides opportunities where traditional media have failed. People of color don't face the same hurdles online that they do with traditional media. They have equal opportunity online to produce new content, launch online businesses, create social networks or start the next great video service. The Internet provides people of color with more than an opportunity to be consumers of news and information, but also to participate in media, without gatekeepers.

## Net Neutrality Preserves the Open Internet

Net Neutrality preserves the low barriers to entry that make the Internet a valuable platform for all communities to have their voices and ideas heard. Safeguarding the open Internet will preserve this low barrier to entry. The Internet allows for new ideas, opportunities and empowerment.

## Economic Empowerment

There are no gatekeepers to prevent businessmen and women from starting an online venture. If the phone and cable companies are allowed to change the Internet, then high startup costs could deter the good ideas of entrepreneurs, content creators or journalists.

There are already thousands of success stories. For example, with only \$526, Jonathan Moore created a Web site called Rowdy Orbit IPTV, which now airs original entertainment programming made by and for people of color. If Moore was faced with the hurdles and startup costs for traditional media, Rowdy Orbit would still be an idea and not a reality.



## **Anyone that Supports Minority Media Ownership Should Be a Strong Proponent of Net Neutrality**

For the same reasons that it's critical for people of color to own more media properties and to have a greater presence on TV and radio, it's also critical for people of color and women to take advantage of the opportunities the open Internet provides. Now is the time to learn from the damage that media consolidation has caused, to preserve the open Internet, and to ensure that barriers to entry for online opportunity remain low.

## **We Are at a Pivotal Moment: The Policy Decisions of Today Will Shape the Internet for the Next Generation**

Without Net Neutrality, the promise of new opportunities online for people of color will be lost, and the Internet will follow the same route as traditional media: into the hands of gatekeepers. The broadband policies adopted today will shape how we use the Internet for years to come. Preserving Net Neutrality will allow the Internet to remain the most open and inclusive communications network ever created.

## **Internet Access Must Be a Priority, but Preserving its Value Is Equally Important**

Finding ways for all Americans to obtain high-speed Internet access must be matched with preserving the openness that makes the Internet so valuable. We should not have to choose between access and openness.

Passing a Net Neutrality rule will not widen the digital divide. If phone and cable companies wanted to invest in bringing Internet access to traditionally marginalized, low-income communities, they would have done so by now. But these companies are more interested in raking in enormous profits and generating the highest return possible than in lowering broadband prices and investing in minority communities.

Permitting online discrimination won't lower prices, but it will diminish the diversity of voices online.

## **Remarks from FCC Commissioner Mignon Clyburn on the Importance of Net Neutrality**

"I fear that if we miss the boat on this opportunity, the Internet will end up becoming media ownership 2.0. ... I hope we can work together to create strong rules that do not cede control of the most significant communications advancement in our lifetimes. By sitting this one out, or worse, by throwing up roadblocks that will enable what is now 'our' Internet to become 'their' Internet, we simply would be reinstating the very kinds of imbalanced structures that we have been attempting for decades to dismantle in other contexts."