



October 23, 2009

Gigi Sohn  
President and Co-Founder  
Public Knowledge  
1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 650  
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Ms. Sohn:

On behalf of the members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the members of the Hispanic Technology and Telecommunications Partnership (HTTP), we want to express our deep indignation over the offensive assertions made in a recent Public Knowledge blog by Art Brodsky, PK Director of Communications, and our concerns about the manifestation of increasingly uncivil and disrespectful discourse around the issue of network neutrality.

In particular, we take genuine exception to the manner in which the author dismisses minorities' opinions as naively misinformed. He wrote:

*"Perhaps the saddest part of the whole affair to date is the role of groups representing minority populations. For whatever reason – whether they believe what the Big Telecom companies tell them or not – many organizations seem to land on policies that hurt their constituencies and fall into ludicrous traps one suspects are not of their making."*

*-excerpt: Big Telecom Foments Hill's Net Neutrality Hysteria 10/18/09*

To make the blanket assertion that minority groups "fall into ludicrous traps" when taking positions on policy is to claim that minorities, and the groups they form to advocate on their behalf, are incapable of intelligently participating in sophisticated debates. Such statements are irresponsible, prejudiced and lack qualification.

To further suggest that the concerns of minority civil rights organizations are being directed to influence the only minority sitting on the FCC is indeed ludicrous. It is categorically unacceptable to claim that minority advocacy groups are colluding with certain interests to

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exploit the ethnic self-identification of government officials who happen to be minorities in leadership positions at the FCC.

Implying that minorities are easily duped and uninformed is astoundingly offensive. But to accuse the nation's most respected and accomplished minority advocacy groups of consciously disregarding the interests of their constituents in order to abet the manipulation of minority officials is beyond insulting. The minority organizations to which Mr. Brodsky refers are groups which have a long legacy of dedicated efforts to advancing the cause of disadvantaged minorities in the United States. They are groups that were created by, led by, and staffed by, the very minorities the article accuses them of injuring. They are groups that have worked diligently to ensure that people of color are able to pursue their aspirations without discrimination.

The suggestion that minority organizations that oppose your position don't do their own thinking, don't have genuine concerns, or don't have their constituents' interests at heart is deeply offensive to us; therefore, we demand that you stop these attacks immediately, and repudiate them.

As advocates and leaders, we have a moral and ethical responsibility to ensure that the way we work, and the way we speak about colleagues who may not share our opinions, honors the legacy of the leaders who came before us and creates a righteous path for leaders of the future. We hope that you will join us in supporting a positive environment in which civil discourse regarding policy issues that affect our communities can take place.

Sincerely,



Hilary O. Shelton  
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Vice President for Advocacy  
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