



November 3, 2014

The Honorable Thomas Wheeler, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
20024 Washington, DC

**RE: 14-28: Protecting and Promoting the Open Internet
10-127: In the Matter of Framework for Broadband Internet Service**

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

We write today as representatives of [Voices for Internet Freedom](#)—including members of the [Media Action Grassroots Network](#), [Presente.Org](#), [ColorOfChange.Org](#), [18 Million Rising](#), [National Hispanic Media Coalition](#), [Center for Social Inclusion](#) and [Free Press](#). Together our organizations represent millions of our nation's most vulnerable communities—including the rural and urban poor, immigrant and communities of color.

The attached statements represent public testimony delivered at *NY Speaks: A Hearing On Our Right to Connect and Communicate*, a public event we hosted in Brooklyn, New York on Monday, October 27th. With over 125 people in attendance, the event represented a critical opportunity for New York residents to share their strong desire for Title II reclassification and mobile parity directly with the FCC. Unfortunately, none from the Commission elected to attend.

Given our inability to speak directly with the FCC, and following the recent story by the Wall Street Journal detailing “hybrid net neutrality rules” the FCC may be exploring, we felt compelled to share this testimony and reiterate our unwavering positions:

- Paid prioritization and discrimination is unacceptable.

- Mobile parity is a must—we require #OneInternet whether wired or wireless.
- Strong and sustainable net neutrality protections grounded in the FCC's Title II authority is what our communities want and need.

The attached testimony offers additional support for these positions, as well as further details about the grave damage a weakened and bifurcated Internet will create. Our communities, which represent this country's future, deserve strong protections for our access to a free and open Internet—true protections that are strong enough to hold up in court.

Sincerely,

Voices for Internet Freedom leadership

encl: comments



Comments of Steven Renderos, National Organizer

October 27, 2014

Where's Brooklyn at? My name is Steven Renderos, I work at the Center for Media Justice also here representing a network of 175 social justice organizations called the Media Action Grassroots Network (MAG-Net). I made the long trek to Brooklyn tonight; I live about four blocks here in Crown Heights. In all seriousness, I want to kick this next section off with a numbers game.

I want to repeat a stat from Dallas Dornell at Color of Change, 320. Three hundred and twenty black bodies killed by law enforcement in the last five years. And we know that if we expand that to black and brown bodies that number grows exponentially. Were it not for the Internet, the names Kimani Grey here in Brooklyn, Michael Brown in Ferguson, Oscar Grant in Oakland would mean nothing. But it's because of the Internet that we recognize those names.

Two hundred and fifty thousand. Two hundred and fifty thousand immigrant deported every year here in the United States. One of them is my friend Victor Guijarro, his son is my godson. Were it not for the work of the DREAM activists, the hash tag #NotOneMore, that number would have no significance to us. The thousands of families, including my friend Victor's who have been broken up by these deportations would be invisible to us.

Ten million. Over 10 million low-income families in the United States many of whom have to apply for their government services, their housing, for every basic function of their daily lives through the Internet. One of them, my mother who has had to learn how to submit a disabilities application and subsequent appeal online because it's the fastest way to get it done.

And five. Five chairs. Five name placards. Five empty seats. Five Commissioners at the FCC who will decide what happens to this vital platform that brings so much meaning to our lives. The Internet lets us see each other's humanity that connects us across struggles against police brutality, deportations, and poverty. That's why we invited all of them and yet they're not here. And their silence speaks loudly. It says that if we don't take over this debate, they will. And what we'll get is an Internet that doesn't allow for that meaningfulness.

Remarks for Media Action Grassroots Network Town Hall – Oct. 27th 2014

Remarks prepared by:

Dennis Chin

Director of Communications, Center for Social Inclusion

Thanks to the Media Action Grassroots Network for organizing this town hall.

My name is Dennis Chin and I am with the Center for Social Inclusion, a national policy strategy organization whose mission is to dismantle structural racial inequity.

The fight for internet freedom is also a fight for affordable, quality, high-speed internet options especially for low-income communities, rural communities and communities of color, many of whom have been historically redlined from fast, reliable and affordable internet.

But, it's these communities who are showing us the way forward.

For example, the Brooklyn-based Red Hook Initiative paved the way to keep their community online, connected and communicating during and after Hurricane Sandy. They were vital to coordinating aid in the aftermath of the storm. They are able to provide their neighborhood with a wireless mesh network partly because they partner with a small, independent internet service provider called Brooklyn Fiber. This network shifts power away from giant telecoms who are largely absent in terms of their presence and connection to the communities they serve. This is powerful stuff. Imagine the implications if we saw more of these kinds of networks.

I mention the Red Hook's network because we need more tools in our fight for internet freedom. The wireless mesh network is just one community-driven example of the types of infrastructure that would better serve all communities because it's tailored and responsive to community need.

So what do we do now? In NYC, yes, we must demand community benefits from giant telecoms. We must challenge rules that give giant telecoms the power to control what we access on the internet. And, we must also work to finance and support community-scale projects like the ones we're seeing in Red Hook that actually shift power and open up economic opportunities - jobs, education - for the historically underrepresented and underserved communities - often communities of color.

The solutions we need are happening right now in our communities. Let's listen to them.

Stay connected with us!

www.centerforsocialinclusion.org
www.facebook.com/centerforsocialinclusion
www.twitter.com/theCSI

colorofchange.org

CHANGING THE COLOR OF DEMOCRACY

My name is Dallas Donnell and I'm here tonight to speak on behalf of ColorofChange.org, the largest online civil rights organization in the country.

As an organization, we believe in a free and open Internet, because we remember a time in 2005 when the world was watching the horrors of Katrina- a preventable disaster that killed nearly 1,900 people, mostly poor black residents in New Orleans. As our co-founders James Rucker and Van Jones watched the aftermath unfold on their TV screens, as many of us did, it was clear that 40 years after the struggles of the civil rights era, black people still had very limited political power in this country.

Out of the horrors of Katrina, ColorofChange was born in James Rucker's living room, with an email blasted out to 1,000 people, asking them to hold our government accountable. Nearly 10 years and over 900,000 members later, we have and will continue to strengthen the political voice of Black people and make government more responsive to their concerns.

That's why we're here today. Because an open Internet is critical to our communities' ability to effectively organize for racial and social justice.

We are urging the FCC to fulfill their duty to act in the public interest, by classifying the Internet under Title 2 and protecting our free and open Internet.

Some say Title 2 is too extreme, and that a pay-to-play corporatized Internet is the way to go. They say if we give more power and control to corporations, it will benefit people of color. We disagree. History has shown that if others are left to tell our stories, they will never be told. We can't count on others to advocate for us; we must be able to advocate for ourselves.

A recent example of this: after the death of Mike Brown, we launched a site called KilledByCops, to collect an unbiased and complete archive of the names of the people in our country who have died at the hands of law enforcement. Thanks to the access provided by a free and open Internet, we currently have a better data-driven understanding of the scale and scope of people killed by law enforcement in the last five years than anything the US government has released publicly. So far, we've shared out the names of more than 320 black people that have been killed by cops in the last five years- a significant number of these deaths went unreported in a corporatized mainstream media.

We will continue to release these names until our government makes this information readily available to the general public, because we want answers to what we see as a full scale epidemic. And based on the five million impressions our site and Twitter feed received in the first week of launch, it seems the general public wants answers too.

It's hard to imagine we'd be able to do this if we had a tiered Internet system, controlled by a corporate bottom line.

That's why we need real- not artificial- net neutrality. And real net neutrality looks like Title 2.



**Testimony of
Michael Scurato
Policy Director, National Hispanic Media Coalition**

**New York Speaks: A Hearing on Our Rights to Connect and Communicate
October 27, 2014**

Tonight has been an incredible morale booster for me, personally. I hope that it has been for many others who are engaged in the fight for Internet freedom as well. And I'm so grateful because it is a fight, and we need every boost we can get. Make no mistake, we are confronting one of the greatest racial justice and free speech issues of our time. The FCC could take action to determine the future of the Internet by the end of this year – and as you've heard, their idea of what the Internet should look like doesn't sound all that appealing.

I speak to you today as the Policy Director of the National Hispanic Media Coalition – a nearly 30-year-old organization that was founded to hold our media makers accountable for not reflecting the true diversity of this country. While we have made incremental progress through the years, some things haven't changed. Mainly, the media has remained a critical space for national discourse yet the traditional media space – TV, radio, newspapers, cable – has remained largely controlled by corporate gatekeepers for the benefit of those with the deepest pockets.

The promise of the Internet to engage all of our communities – creatively, politically, and economically – and put our country on a path to great equality of opportunity for all should not be understated. Nor should the importance of keeping it free from gatekeepers, discrimination, corporate censorship, and pay-for-play schemes. It has helped DREAMers organize for immigration reform. It brought the country the real stories of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown and so many others that the traditional media forgot or swept under the rug. And it is only becoming more important as time progresses.

So while most of us can't afford to print a newspaper, start a cable network, or buy a television station, we can write a blog, create videos, organize for change, or start businesses online. Of all forms of media, the content we see online is by far the most representative of every corner of this country. Fast lanes, slow lanes, blocking, discrimination – those practices will destroy the Internet and the potential it has to lift up so many. The FCC must reclassify Internet access service as a Title II common carrier service and impose strong rules against blocking and discrimination on the Internet, regardless of whether we choose to access it on the computers at home or the phones in our pockets. Thank you.



Net Neutrality is an essential tool for the Latino community. We depend on the Internet in order to engage politically. Without a free and open Internet, our access to civic engagement will diminish. Because of the Internet we are able to respond when our communities are attacked. Presente, which represents hundreds of thousands of Latinos across the country used the Internet to mobilize Latinos and our allies to kick xenophobic TV Personality Lou Dobbs off the air. We've used the Internet to call attention to the beating of immigrants and to uplift all the contributions that Latinos make to our culture and society. The fluid ability to respond to attacks on the Latino community will be placed in danger if the Internet isn't protected. The battle over the internet and title II reclassification is one of the most important racial and economic justice issues of our time. Most Latinos use our mobile devices to get online. Fast lanes are dangerous because it bakes into the Internet a systemic disadvantage to those of us with fewer economic resources. It means that the Internet, a place where we go to become educated, that we use for work, for political participation will become less and less accessible to our community. The Internet has long held the promise of real democratization for the Latino community, a place where we can manage and produce our own content. That is why paid prioritization is such a loser for everyone except for corporations, and the only way to stop paid prioritization is through title II reclassification.



1918 Bonita St., 3rd Floor
Berkeley, CA 94704
e: info@18millionrising.org
w: www.18millionrising.org

October 27, 2014

Re: Testimony at Free Press/Center for Media Justice Net Neutrality Hearing
Cayden Mak, New Media Director, 18MR.org

People think I'm joking when I say I come from the internet. I work there now, as the tech director at 18MillionRising.org. But I mean I come from the internet like I remember our first Macintosh: my mom's school district sold it to us at a steep discount. I lived for the startup noise. I lived for the hiss and whine of the dial-up groaning to life. I am 100% serious when I say I come from the internet. The internet raised me. The internet saved my life.

Have you ever been young and queer and brown in the Great American Suburb? Because I have. It takes its toll: not all of us make it out. Of the closet, or the subdivision, of our teenage years. Man I am almost 28 and it's been a decade since I lived there and I'm *still* healing those wounds.

An open internet isn't just a matter of survival. It's a matter of opening us to the possibility of magic. Not just magic in the Arthur C. Clarke sense that any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic, but magic in the sense that we're open to the encounter that will change us.

The internet gave me my first chosen family. It wasn't just about ego tripping that there were college kids on the message board who wanted to talk to me about ideas: it was about the moment of mutual recognition. It was a series of encounters that changed everything. The foggy predetermined procession of days snapped into focus: there, a route of escape that was not forfeit or death. A word for how I felt. Concepts that described what I saw. Other people who made it out alive.

That's how I know an open internet is about making magic. I've seen it happen. I'm living proof that when you have an open network that empowers the least among us to become creators just as much as the rich and the powerful, we're *literally* saving lives. It's not just base survival. It's a chance to thrive.

When I think about the powerful need for social change in this country, I think about how crucial an open internet is. I think about how over a million Tweets were sent about Mike Brown's murder before CNN picked up the story and ran, and for better or for worse thank god for high-profile live-streamers, because otherwise they wouldn't believe Ferguson, Missouri is America in 2014.

The stakes are high. They have always been high. But this series of encounters is moving toward something new. Let's get heady for a second. Althusser suggests that the pileup of encounters is what precipitates the birth of a world.



I have dedicated most of my adult life to building a better internet, to making sure no more queer brown kids get lost. I'm here to say that magic is real, and that real magic isn't just a smaller, faster processor. It's how fast family has become a freelance journalist in LA and a junior professor in Ohio and a nurse in Denver and an organizer in Florida.

We're from the internet. We're saving lives. We are turning our faces toward one another, toward the radical encounter. We are birthing a world.