



April 22, 2016

VIA ECFS

Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

***RE: Expanding Consumer's Video Navigation Choices, MB Docket No. 16-42;
Commercial Availability of Navigation Devices, CS Docket No. 97-80; Promoting
the Availability of Diverse and Independent Sources of Video Programming, MB
Docket No. 16-41***

Dear Ms. Dortch:

In 1994, I became the first person in my family to graduate from college. I never knew about college until my educational aspirations began to formalize by watching television shows like *The Cosby Show*, *A Different World*, and *Family Matters*. These three television programs depicted the limitless possibilities that are available to people of color through higher education and a strong family system. Today, there are few options on mainstream television that reflect these images. This absence of quality programming has fueled my passion as an educator and television producer.

I have produced television shows and movies in Hollywood for 20 years with a passion to bring positive family images to Americans. Part of my passion is because I am concerned about the types of programs that are available to my young nieces. Why this concern? Because content creators in my profession understand that entertainment can shape perceptions about life. A question often asked by many in my profession is "Does art imitate life, or does life imitate art?" It's both. Television images shape attitudes, behaviors, and personal beliefs and can open people's minds to new paradigms. Anyone who has children in their lives has certainly questioned the types of programming available to them, which is why I have spent 20 years creating programs for the marketplace.

Creating programs has been a challenge in cable and broadcast because networks regularly turn down show ideas that are not cutting edge enough to stir up society and grab quick ratings. I understand network interest in ratings, however I also know there is

a place for diverse programs on air. Needless to say cable and broadcast stations have not created a space for it. As a content creator I know first hand that networks green light shows that stir up controversy and not shows that build character, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Character building content struggles to find distribution in order to reach wide audiences.

In 2004, I set out to launch my own cable channel to bring these alternate images to mainstream consumers, however my channel was refused carriage by satellite and cable channels alike. The common statement was “We carry BET.” or “We have TV One.” Cable provider programmers see race and culture through one lens and have not realized there are multiple aspects within an ethnic culture that cannot be captured solely by 2 or 3 channels. Being shutout of the cable marketplace left me and hundreds of other content owners with programs with no place to share our creative voice in mainstream outlets.

Despite these creative programming barriers a resolute mind has been necessary because we are responsible for the world we create and how our work impacts the lives of others. Life does imitate art, which is why the Unlock the Box proposal by the FCC is so important. Unlock the Box opens doors to limitless possibilities for programmers, viewers of content, and society at large.

In 2014, I began to assemble UNIFY Digital Library for Black Arts & Culture to bring together 75 years of Black TV shows and movies on one streaming platform. There is a rich history of television programs starring African Americans that have helped shape American culture. Many of these programs are hidden away in studio vaults because cable outlets do not believe they are valuable to consumers. For example, Julia (1968) was a heart warming family sitcom that explored a Black mother moving into an integrated apartment complex and teaching her son about race relations. The show was in the Nielsen’s Top 10 but is seldom made accessible to audiences today. In 1970s The Flip Wilson Show was the #2 show in the country and illustrated how Blacks and Whites could laugh and just do life together. Laugh-in, All in the Family, Maude, Star Trek, The Jeffersons, and countless other shows helped advance society in so many ways, and deserve to be preserved and enjoyed. It may not be appropriate for mainstream stations, but at UNIFYme.tv we hope to bring this content and so many other great programs to consumers whenever they want it to insure that consumers have diverse options. The FCC proposal for Unlock the Box is the perfect option to provide audiences more content without begging Cable and Satellite operators permission to carry our service to reach mainstream America. This is part of the reason why I believe Unlock the Box is so special.

Unlock the Box gives audiences easy access to diverse programming from streaming services like UNIFY and other content providers who have been shutout from cable outlets. Cable and satellite stations have been gatekeepers who have invariably dismissed so much rich content and deprived audiences from experiences of old and/or

new content. Unlock the Box is the perfect portal that opens up the marketplace for consumers to have more options. An open set top box is a simple device that brings all of the popular mainstream shows from network and cable outlets, and alternative programs on one portal. Unlock the Box is brilliant and much needed.

Television needs a more balanced depiction of society to make room for fresh outlooks on life. Fresh perspectives advance society in so many positive ways. When shows like All in the Family and The Jeffersons were made available it challenged America to be better. Unlock the Box creates a portal for more perspectives to reach mainstream viewers, and without question will make America better.

There have been unsubstantiated arguments that suggest having one set top box to organize network shows on one window and granting an easy portal to internet channels is a bad idea. That's simply corporate greed that fears competition and a disruption in a business model that has reaped a few cable companies billions of dollars annually.

We cannot let corporate greed or political lobbying pollute the conversation with false narratives. Unlock the Box is simply profound and profoundly simple. Unlock the Box is one box that does so much. One box will:

1. Save consumers money by not being billed every month to rent cable boxes - forever.
2. Open doors for diverse programs to be easily accessible to millions of people, and
3. Give families an easy way to be entertained either via cable stations or internet channels without having to connect 3 or 4 streaming devices to their televisions.

Technological innovation has granted us a means to a simple, cost effective way to have all forms of entertainment. Unlock the Box is it. One Box. No extra cords. No extra costs.

It would be a travesty if this wonderful opportunity does not come to fruition because cable companies want to keep charging consumers ridiculous monthly costs to make themselves richer. It's disappointing to see corporations abusing the wonderful privilege they have to serve the American people. Families deserve better service than to be deemed servants to corporate greed.

It was disheartening to learn that some politicians who were elected to protect the needs of the people have yielded to self-serving political interests and lobbyist and denounce open set top boxes. If you are concerned about the outlandish price of your cable bill contact your political officials and see if they have given in to cable companies in exchange for personal interests. The political lobbying in action is sadly reminiscent of an episode of the Netflix show House of Cards. The American people should not stand for it. Quite frankly, there is no reason for a politician or civil rights organization who claims their mission is to give voice to the voiceless to support cable companies on this

issue. Unlock the Box is the best thing to be proposed for the American people and should be endorsed by everyone.

I commend the FCC Chairman for introducing Unlock the Box as a means to take America higher. The FCC is truly honoring its duty to protect the American consumer and preserve family's finances so households can reallocate more money to savings, college expenses, family vacations, etc.

I am not a techie. I don't rush out to purchase every new gadget because technology changes so fast. I prefer simple products that make life simple versus dozens of devices that are cool and have a big learning curve. Although I'm not a "tech-a-holic" I know when something is just right. Unlock the Box is both cool for techies and practical for individuals who embrace simplicity. Furthermore, Unlock the Box embodies American ideals in many ways. Having one box provide a simple portal to the vibrant new channels produced by new creative voices is genius. It gives consumers tremendous flexibility to navigate the traditionally great content, while being exposed to great new emerging talent. Unlock the Box gives access to countless voices that have been shutout from the mainstream because cable and satellite providers have been gatekeepers identifying what they deem worthy to Americans. Unlock the Box doesn't hurt consumers. It gives consumers greater opportunity to easily access diverse content.

One of the greatest liberties afforded to Americans is freedom of choice and opportunities for entrepreneurship. Unlock the Box promotes and celebrates both. Unlock the Box streamlines technology in a way that consumers have a choice to watch limitless programming via one portal. Unlock the Box paves the way for entrepreneurs with diverse perspectives a gateway into mainstream programming to reach new consumers. Unlock the Box clearly organizes programming around themes that give viewers a simple list of programming options - whether it's on a mainstream channel like CBS or Fox, or a new independent channel. Sports themes, nature, romance, culture, etc. Type in a theme and get a wealth of options to suit your taste no matter where it was created. Unlock the Box creates access and opportunity for everyone, and makes finding content you like easy no matter where it is. That's the beauty of the technology.

The only opposition to this brave new innovation is a cable company who fears competition and wants to keep consumers paying a lifetime lease for a set top box. Unlock the Box unlocks the stranglehold that Cable and Satellite providers have on consumer's pockets. Inspiration and role models come from many different places. There is great programming out there that can transform a life and it may not be on mainstream channels. It shouldn't be suppressed. It should be given the best opportunity to be showcased - especially if it can inspire someone to be their best self.

One of the greatest American dreams is ownership, whether it is a car or a home, or a degree. Leasing cable boxes forever without having a chance to simply own your

entertainment gateway is like a lifelong layaway plan or a never ending student loan. It's wrong. Unlock the Box allows consumers to buy a box one time and not have to be locked into constant price hikes by a cable company to lease a box. What is not to love about that? Unlock the Box provides more programming options, one simple box, and one payment. It's beautiful.

Decades ago the tobacco industry populated television and billboard ads with cigarette smokers and they lied to the public by professing that nicotine was not bad for your health. Once again, people imitated art and millions began to smoke to be like the advertisements and movie stars. Decades later we learned that the tobacco companies lied and it led to millions of Americans being addicted to nicotine and consequently fighting for their life against cancer. Fortunately, the FCC stepped in and put much needed regulations on the tobacco industry, which has led to millions of lives being saved from corporate lies and greed. We will look at 2016 and the introduction of Unlock the Box as another historic intervention by the FCC. It is intervention and innovation that is critical at this time.

I am proud to be a part of the film and television industry. I am equally proud to curate an archive of Black Arts and Culture with UNIFYme.tv. My prayer is that our platform is given the greatest opportunity to reach the world and inspire others to live out dreams they never realized were possible. The Cosby Show and A Different World did it for me and millions of people in my generation. All in the Family, Julia, and The Jeffersons made America a better country by challenging societal norms. What new creative voices can we expose society to through Unlock the Box? Unlock the Box will give more unique content access to the world and lead to America becoming better than ever. I support the FCC and Chairman Wheeler in this bold vision. There are no limits to what we can do and who we can become as a nation when we get out of the way and let innovation lead us.

Warmest regards,



Dr. Donahue Tuitt
CEO & Founder, UNIFYme.tv
UNIFY Digital Library for Black Arts & Culture
(347) 249-9357
donahue@UNIFYme.tv

[UNIFYme.tv](https://unifyme.tv) is an online [marketplace and](#) video streaming archive managed by UNIFY Digital Library for Black Arts & Culture, Inc. ("UNIFY"). UNIFY is an educational think tank that leads socially conscious research and intervention strategies through making artistic and cultural works accessible to the public to promote social change and produce equity in society.