

I attended the public forum in Chicago on Tuesday, 7/13/10.

The laughable progression of non-profit leaders bought by Comcast to suck up testimony time with ads for their agencies was a drag. They were as predictable as robots. Usually it was the Executive Director, or a Board member, and usually they each began admitting that they were on the Comcast bankroll. Then they would continue to ramble on about their services to their community without saying anything of substance about the merger for the full two minutes allowed each speaker. Their obvious goal of preventing community people from speaking was shameful.

They added nothing but a raw demonstration of how low Comcast will go - twisting the arms of the community organizations they give charitable grants to in order to pervert the community input process.

Comcast should not be pulling strings at the non-profits which receives its grant money. The evidence that they do is in the ID logs and testimony of those testifying for them. The proof is in the pudding. Don't testify, don't expect future favors. Testify and you are among our favorite grantees. They will deny it. We know by the boring repetition that it is true. Testify and your grant is approved. Or is it? All they have to promise is the hope of a future grant to get "professional" testimony.

In short, I was not allowed to speak. These puppet commenter's used up half the allotted time for public comments. It went over and I was second from the end. I was told I couldn't speak. If we were to subtract all the paid-by-Comcast-grant-money speakers (over 50% of those able to register to speak), the panel would have had time to hear everyone including me and easily finish on time.

I wanted to say that this merger is bad for all artists and independent media creators. It is bad for society. We need more diversity. We need decentralization not centralization. We need competition. We need you to defend the people's interest not the corporate interest.

As more and more people express themselves online we need more and more access not the less and less access that centralization provides. If you encourage centralization today you are courting a collision of democracy with corporate monopoly. This could be very ugly. Please do the right thing and deny this merger.