



The Public Advocate
for the City of New York

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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

February 28, 2016

Mr. Andrew Lack, Chairman – NBC News and MSNBC
Mr. Steve Burke, CEO - NBCUniversal
NBC News
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, NY 10112

Dear Mr. Lack and Mr. Burke:

For four years, Dr. Melissa Harris-Perry has served as the voice on MSNBC that speaks truth to power. The Melissa Harris-Perry (MHP) show has presented an unrivaled approach to dissecting the intersections of race and gender in American culture. It has become the go-to source to discuss the foremost policy issues in our country that are often neglected by mainstream media. Therefore, it is with great urgency that I write to implore MSNBC to immediately restore the MHP show to its full potential.

We rely upon MSNBC as one of the only networks that has traditionally offered fairly balanced and informative news. While there is no one that can doubt the allure and importance of covering the 2016 presidential election cycle, it is important for that coverage to reflect the diversity of our culture. For the last month, I have seen disgraced news anchor Brian Williams on more to discuss this election cycle than Dr. Harris-Perry, who is a professor of political science and feminist scholar and whose voice is sorely missing from the discussion.

According to recent reports your network has suffered a declining viewership. The MHP show, which aired on weekends, has rated higher than many of MSNBC's weekly programs. The alleged pre-emption of Dr. Melissa Harris-Perry's show by MSNBC executives with little or no notice shows a lack of respect for MHP staff and viewers like me that value substantive news coverage from trusted sources. It is my hope that MSNBC will work with MHP and return the show to its loyal viewers.

Sincerely,

Letitia James
Public Advocate for the City of New York