

National Black Church Initiative

P.O. Box 65177
Washington, DC 20035
202-744-0184
dcbci2002@gmail.com
www.naltblackchurch.com

Contact:
Rev. Anthony Evans
202-744-0184

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For Immediate Release

The National Black Church Initiative Says “No Tears” Over the Removal of MSNBC Host Melissa Harris-Perry

“From the Black Church: A Moral Lesson For All”

Washington, DC – The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a faith-based coalition of 34,000 churches comprised of 15 denominations and 15.7 million African Americans sees a double whammy at work by the removal of MSNBC host Melissa Harris-Perry. We are aware of the institutional racism that exists and the different standards employed by NBC News during the Brian Williams lying and cheating case. Despite the formidableness of the Brian Williams’ case and the persisting and evident discrimination compared with the case of Melissa Harris Perry, this is not the only reason as to why the black church is speaking out about the removal of Melissa Harris-Perry. We speak out because of the lesson gained from what happens when the erosion of morality standards occurs and what can happen to those who speak Truth to immoral practices as articulated by the Word of God in the Holy Bible. None of our tears can be a substitute for the understanding of and standing firm on the transformational power of Truth of the Gospel.

At the height of the numerous debates on same-sex marriage, Melissa Harris-Perry degraded the black church for their moral stance and opposition with regards to this issue. The church assumes the position of the Christian teachings and believes that gay marriage is a social construct (which is no marriage at all). The church assumes this position irrespective of President Obama and the Supreme Court’s approval of this expanded or altered definition of marriage. President Obama has violated the Christian teachings with his support of gay marriage and should be denied communion. Ms. Harris-Perry hosted a nationally televised program that never allowed for the voices of the black church to be heard.

Nowhere did we find that she invited us to be guests on her show. These actions served as indication of seeming conscious efforts to silence the black church. Simply put, the actions of her and many of her supporters who advocate same-sex marriage vilified and relegated the characterization of the black church to bigots and hate-mongers. This is not the role or purpose of the church that has inadvertently gotten conveyed to the public through the actions of Ms. Perry.

The church takes no pleasure in bringing these concerns to the attention of the public. By no means do we assume a position of righteous indignation. We earnestly do empathize with the pain Ms. Melissa Harris-Perry is experiencing at the moment. Ms. Harris-Perry, too, has raised important issues concerning equality, gender empowerment and race relations in our country. Her voice has offered a necessary perspective to be considered alongside with other voices. Inasmuch as these social issues have been addressed in important ways under the journalistic auspices of Ms. Harris-Perry, the morality and the great principles and teachings of the church remain at stake. The moral position of the church's authority on same-sex marriage must be protected and revered. The foundation of Christian beliefs remains paramount to the church's teaching of biblically based marriage, which is between one man and one woman.

Rev Anthony Evans, NBCI president said, "the black church still loves Ms. Melissa Harris-Perry. And we will defend her right to be treated fairly under God's law and in the work place. The removal of Ms. Harris-Perry suggests she has been treated unfairly by MSNBC and the Black Church speaks vehemently against the dangers of institutional racism that seems to be the traditional norm and practice at MSNBC. Our society in 2016 is a complicated mixed of individuals believing they know what is good for the moral stance of society. As a nation founded upon the principles of Christianity, the media, the government, and people cannot serve as the moral authority on marriage. The Bible remains the moral standard and the Bible does not sanction same-sex marriage. In many ways, while we believe Ms. Harris-Perry owes the black church an apology because of the hurt caused from the shaming of Christian principles and because of her own experiences from having studied theology and having received an honorary degree in theology, we understand that God has the final say in all of our actions and we will be judged accordingly. Yet, in the final analysis, as Ms. Harris-Perry finds herself in time of need, we stand with her to underscore and demonstrate the loving and compassion nature of the church of Jesus Christ."

In an email, Ms. Harris-Perry stated:

Here is the reality: our show was taken—without comment or discussion or notice—in the midst of an election season. After four years of building an audience, developing a brand, and developing trust with our viewers, we were effectively and utterly silenced. Now, MSNBC would like me to appear for four inconsequential hours to read news that they deem relevant without returning to our team any of the editorial control and authority that makes MHP Show distinctive.

The purpose of this decision seems to be to provide cover for MSNBC, not to provide voice for MHP Show. I will not be used as a tool for their purposes. I am not a token, mammy, or little brown bobble head. Lack, Griffin, or MSNBC does not own me. I love our show. I want it back. I have wept more tears than I can count and I find this deeply painful, but I don't want back on air at any cost. I am only willing to return when that return happens under certain terms.

What misfortune that part of Ms. Harris-Perry's brand got established through the degradation of the black church. Her vast societal contributions did not necessitate a need to throw darts at the black church. Notwithstanding, the leadership of NBCI will address the inappropriate conduct of MSNBC concerning the issues of institutional racism and double standards within its organization. We still acknowledge the journalistic contributions of Melissa Harris-Perry for speaking truth to power.

Yet, as Ms. Harris-Perry heals from this great loss in her life, we continue to stand with Ms. Harris-Perry. We do, however, must ask the questions: "Where are the friends of Ms. Harris-Perry now? Where are the Human Rights Campaign in the defense of Ms. Harris? Where is the voice of the African American women organizations and other black and white leading feminists? Where is the voice of Dean Pollard of Howard University School of Divinity and other leading black liberal theologians? Where are CNN's Don Lemon and Anderson Cooper? Trust can only be put in God and not what appears to be popular and based upon the principles of humankind for they will not protect any of us. Ms. Harris-Perry and all of us should take this as a lesson that when we erroneously assume a moral stance on issues fundamentally contradicting the teachings of Christian principles, we are put in a compromising position to receive a reciprocating, fair, and sometimes painful moral judgment. You cannot curse the church and demand its' divine protection all at the same time. We must continue to uphold and stand firm in the teachings and instructiveness of the Word of God as articulated in the Holy and Living Bible. Amen.

About NBCI

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is a coalition of 34,000 African American and Latino churches working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. NBCI's mission is to provide critical wellness information to all of its members, congregants, churches and the public. Our methodology is utilizing faith and sound health science.

NBCI's purpose is to partner with major organizations and officials whose main mission is to reduce racial disparities in the variety of areas cited above. NBCI offers faith-based, out-of-the-box and cutting edge solutions to stubborn economic and social issues. NBCI's programs are governed by credible statistical analysis, science based strategies and techniques, and methods that work. Visit our website at www.naltblackchurch.com.