

FOX

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 tions are still being scheduled.

The seven-year-old FOX News Channel, owned by media mogul Rupert Murdoch, is a 24-hour general news service available in more than 82 million homes. FOX News Chairman Roger Ailes issued a statement saying, "FOX News is proud to work with the CBC Institute in 2007 as we did in 2003 ...for the candidates to present their ideas and allow voters to make informed decisions.

The issue is bigger than that, says James Rucker, executive director of ColorOfChange.org.

"The CBC cannot claim to represent Black Americans and at the same time legitimize a network that calls Black churches a cult, implies that Barack Obama is a terrorist, and uses the solemn occasion of Coretta Scott King's funeral to call Black leaders 'racist,'" said Rucker.

Within the last two weeks, thousands of new members have joined ColorOfChange.org as the organization has begun pressuring the CBC not to partner with FOX.

FOX is a right-wing news network that has a history of opposing the issues and principles maintained by the CBC and its supporters. This, however, is not the first time that FOX and the CBC have come together for a presidential debate. The CBC Institute chose this network, over BET, to air its debate in September of 2003.

At that time then CBC Chairman Elijah E. Cummings (D-Md.), who brokered the deal, said, "We have no permanent friends. We have no permanent enemies. We have only permanent interests."

Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.) chair of the CBC Institute could not be reached for comment during Easter recess.

He said in a release, "As a leading organization dedicated to educating the public on issues of national policy, the CBC Institute is committed to presenting the presidential candidates to the broadest audience possible."

Candice Tolliver, a spokeswoman for the CBC Institute says the organization is once again trying to reach a broader audience.

"I would encourage people to continue to give their feedback because we're hearing all of this and we are going to ensure that each one

of our debates is an unfettered, unfiltered opportunity for the candidates to present their platforms and means not impacted by news or political organizations," said Tolliver in an interview with the NNPA News Service. "Our goal, was, number one to get broadcast partners who would enable us to reach the greatest number of households. And CNN and FOX news, whether they are liberal or conservative are the

largest cable news networks in the world."

FOX News boasts 86 million viewers while CNN boasts 105 million.

Regardless of volume, Rucker says the principles remain as steady as they were in 2003.

"We shouldn't expect anything different," insists Rucker. "I don't think people will see it anymore legitimate than they do now."

Rucker says this decision

"sullies the brand" of the CBC, which calls itself the "conscience of the Congress."

Since the decision broke, nearly 12,000 emails and approximately 800 phone calls from ColorOfChange.org have gone unanswered by the CBC. For Rucker, this proves a lack of accountability and leadership.

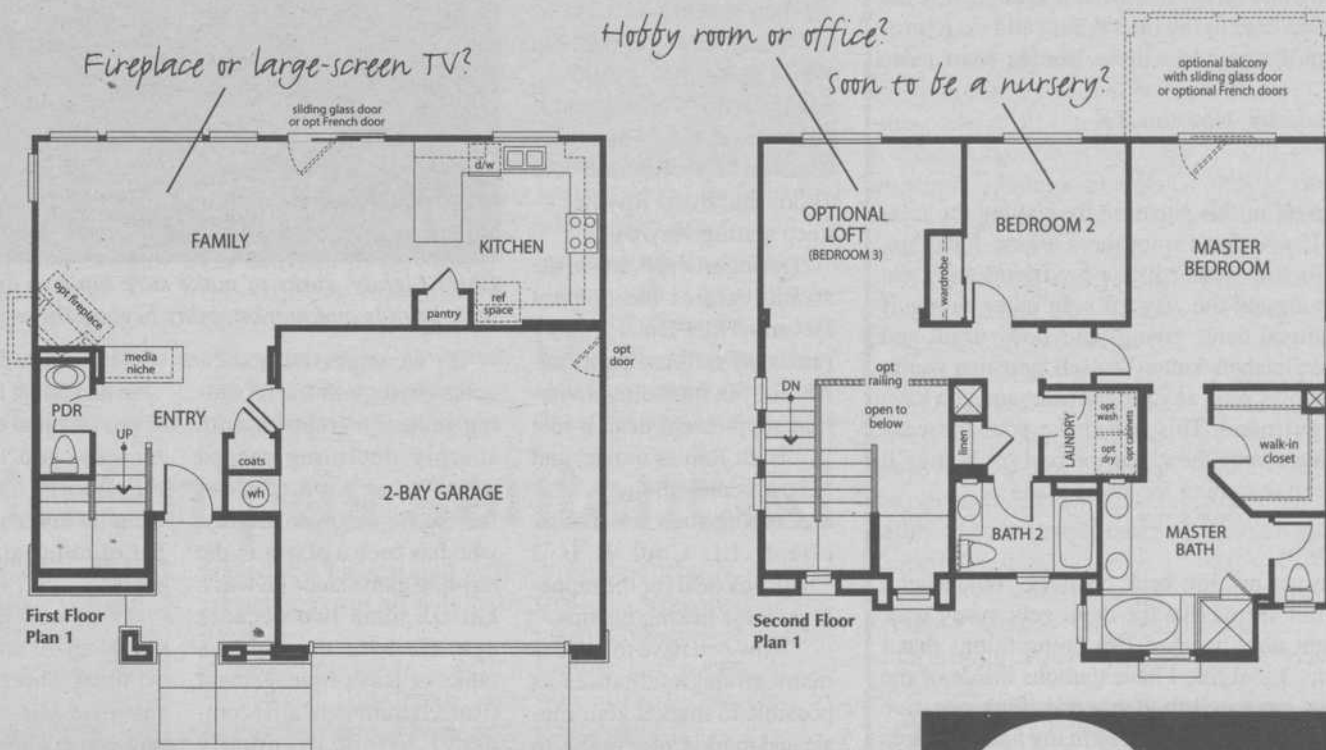
"We couldn't get a single member of the CBC to explain why they would want

to do this... Our belief is that most folks who are constituents of these folks do not think this is a good idea," Rucker explains.

Rucker is at a lost as to what the CBC seeks to gain from its partnership with FOX besides the fact that FOX is a contributor to the CBC Foundation and the Institute's 2003 reasoning that FOX will reach a broader audience. Rucker says the CBC appears to have divided

allegiances. "I think there is a loyalty component," he said. "The CBC Institute's decision is shamefully out of step with most Black voters — and now Black voters will hold our leaders accountable and demand they end their partnership with FOX."

Akhiah Allen writes for the Howard University News Service. NNPA Washington Correspondent Hazel Trice Edney contributed to this story.



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