

# Presenter attacks Fox News' 'inexcusable marginalisation of black men and women'

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An American television presenter has claimed there is an "indefensible and inexcusable" marginalisation of black men and women at Fox News, amid a multibillion takeover deal involving British-based broadcaster Sky.

Kelly Wright, a Fox News anchor since 2003, said there were only a "handful" of non-white presenters on the channel, while other colleagues complained of allegations of sexism.

Mr Wright and an ex-colleague earlier gave evidence to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) ahead of the proposed £11.7bn (€13.1bn) takeover of Sky by 21st Century Fox being scrutinised by the watchdog on the grounds of media plurality and broadcasting standards.

Speaking at a panel discussion chaired by former Labour leader Ed Miliband in Parliament, Mr Wright said: "I don't like what's been happening with regard to racial disparity within our corporate culture. It's wrong and we are better than this.

"Leadership - while focused on making sure the brand of Fox News could dominate in the ratings, flourish financially and develop a powerful organisation - somewhere along the way in terms of our pursuit of our success and greatness, failed to be fair and balanced to all of our employees regardless of race, age, gender, faith, creed or colour, and to our public at large.

"Our leaders simply seem to overlook the value of diversity."

He said he was "one of the few" black television news anchors on Fox, and said he felt his career had been hampered by having his role changed and moved to an overnight slot.

He said: "It is indefensible and inexcusable when there are so many talented black men and women and other people of colour who can fulfil this role.

"We still have a culture of systemic and institutional bias in America and in our corporations.

"We cannot turn a blind eye. My single demand is that we change our corporate culture."

Another journalist, Jessica Golloher, said she was marginalised from her role as Middle Eastern correspondent, and was taken off covering the Russian Olympics in favour of a male colleague - despite her being a fluent Russian speaker, while her colleague had no grasp of the language.

She said she was told to be his "number two" and was asked to report on trivial matters instead, including a "lacy knickers ban".

She said she was told her contract would not be renewed with Fox, 24 hours after opening a complaint at the company. She and Mr Knight are two of 26 current and former Fox employees involved in a range of harassment and discrimination lawsuits.

Fox is controlled by the Murdoch family - Rupert and his sons Lachlan and James - and any deal is aimed at seizing control of the 61% of Sky it does not already own.

The CMA has around six months to investigate the merger and provide Culture Secretary Karen Bradley with advice, after which she must then reach a final decision on whether or not the merger can proceed, including any conditions that will apply in order to do so.

The watchdog also faces the task of delving into claims of misconduct at Fox in the US, which have ranged from alleged racial and sexual harassment to making up quotes.

Chairing the discussion on Monday, Mr Miliband, who has been a vocal opponent of the Fox-Sky deal, said: "We believe - the MPs who have taken up this cause - that Fox News has had a poisonous effect on political debate in the United States, in its racism, misogyny, and that's quite apart from its terrible record on corporate governance.

"Our contention is that Rupert Murdoch uses his media outlets to pursue a particular point of view.

"The danger we have in relation to this bid is that a move from 39% ownership of Sky (to 100%) will allow Sky News to move from being a trusted and independent broadcaster into essentially another plaything for Rupert Murdoch's political position."

He said reports that Sky would close down its Sky News channel if the takeover bid was blocked by the CMA were "an empty threat".