

CNN News Central

07/25/25

3:17:04 p.m.

10 minutes and 9 seconds

BRIANNA KEILAR: The FCC under President Trump, has greenlit an \$8-billion merger between Paramount Global and Skydance Media. Skydance will be able to finalize the deal and take control of Paramount in the coming weeks. The merger review process was riddled with allegations of political interference stemming from Trump's scathing criticism of Paramount's CBS News division. We're joined now by the trailblazing former CBS News anchor and reporter, and the author of *The New York Times* bestseller and critically acclaimed memoir, *Connie*, the Connie Chung. Connie, thank you so much for being with us.

[CHUNG AUDIO ISSUES]

KEILAR: I wanted to ask you. I know that you've been watching this all so carefully. What concessions in this merger concern you the most? Or is it really the totality of them?

CONNIE CHUNG: Well, I — I fear the end of CBS as I knew it. It's — CBS was always a standalone network. It was autonomous. The news division was autonomous, but — and it was always unencumbered by pressures from politicians, including presidents, and unencumbered by bean counters, but now? I — I can see very clearly that the days that I remembered are long gone. Honest, unbiased, fact-based journalism is being tainted and those who — who practiced that journalism, like Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite, have that that kind of journalism has disappeared. I — and I also fear that gone are the days of Frank Stanton, who was the president of CBS, who defended the rights of the journalism, the First Amendment, the fourth estate before Congress and he represented all journalists in many ways. For me, it's — I see it as shame on Shari Redstone and Larry Ellison and his son David, who have — who appear to know — who have tainted journalism and they seem to only know greed, avarice and I worry about this CBS that I used to know. Ellison lawyers told CBS that they would wipe away diversity, and I would never have had the a glorious career at CBS or NBC or ABC had it not been for the Civil Rights Act of 1964, in which women and minorities were finally recognized as equal in the respect that they could not be discriminated against and could get the jobs that they sought.

KEILAR: Yeah. Connie, and I'm sorry to interrupt you. I'm sorry to interrupt you on that, but yes, to your point, they pledge not to implement any new DEI policies. That was what Paramount's soon to be owners.

CHUNG: Yes.

KEILAR: But Skydance said that was one of the concessions there. I wonder when you —

CHUNG: Yes.

KEILAR: — you know, you're someone that so many journalists look up to and at CBS News,

especially. So if you are talking to people who are working at CBS News and they're, you know, they're trying they're still trying to do their best work. And we know that there are so many of our colleagues —

CHUNG: Yes.

KEILAR: — there who are doing that. I mean, what — what do you — what do you say to them?

CHUNG: I would — I would say that they have to fight the good fight that they have to protect the legacy of CBS. They cannot allow biased owners because honestly, I don't think CBS is necessarily the culprit. The — what needs to be policed is social media, which have no fact-checkers, podcasters and the like. No one is checking those facts and the problem is — is that — that is inaccurate information that's being disseminated. I think that all — of all of the changes that so far have occurred by Shari Redstone and the Ellisons are, I — I have difficulty believing what they claim, which is that the *60 Minutes* agreement had nothing to do with the merger, or a settlement had nothing to do with the merger, and also that the disappearance of Steve [sic] Colbert had nothing to do — it had only to do with financial issues. It all smells. I think they should be putting ankle bracelets — on ankle monitor — anchor — ankle monitors on certain anchors at certain cable stations in prime time. Those are the culprits.

KEILAR: And I wonder just more broadly, how you think the ability of journalists to cover Trump independently has changed since his first term.

CHUNG: Once — once again, Brianna?

KEILAR: How — you know, other networks, of course, other journalists are looking at this merger so many things obviously have happened — right — and not just at CBS News. How do you think the ability of journalists to cover Trump independently has changed just broadly in recent years?

CHUNG: It is — it is — you know, the — the — the period, the decade of greed was the 1980s and that's when companies that owned networks acquiesced to the new owners, not the original owners who had felt a responsibility to journalism. So it already began in the 1980s, when companies that were looking at the bottom line started out — started to only look at money, look at networks as money-making machines. Now, the extreme has occurred. I — I greatly fear the — that the pendulum cannot swing back. So I — I want all of us who have been in journalism and are still in journalism to speak truth to power. We cannot allow what we learned as journalists to — we can't cave. We just can't. That's what I believe, but I don't — I don't believe in opinion in news. They're just — there's no — I just want facts and I think when I was crisscrossing the country promoting my memoir, I — I discovered that I — I would get applause when I would say I just want facts and I think there are many news organizations that just provide facts and label analysis as analysis. I don't want any bloviators. So, I'm — since I'm out of the news business, I really feel that I can cross the line and not stay in my lane because I'm no longer a journalist and I — I have some bona fides in journalism and I want to be able to say that we, in journalism and you, Brianna, who I respect tremendously, should just continue to fight the good

fight and just tell the truth, just give facts.

KEILAR: Connie Chung, it is so wonderful to have you on the program today. Thank you so much for joining us.

CHUNG: I thank you for inviting me and I appreciate many of those who work at CNN who just provide the facts. Thank you.

KEILAR: Thank you, Connie.