

**Martin Fuller, freelance television director and series editor—  
written evidence (FCF0021)**

**House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee inquiry into the  
future of Channel 4**

I grew up in the 1980s in a working-class home in the north of England. Around me - in school, at the local football ground, then, as I grew older, in pubs - you'd witness sexism, racism and homophobia on a weekly, sometimes daily, basis. It wasn't everywhere, there were lots of enlightened people around. But it was definitely there: a stain on the fabric of life, and one which seemed to be endorsed by some newspapers, politicians, and even, at times, hugely popular TV shows.

One of the main reasons I didn't grow up to share in that prejudice, despite its very tangible presence, was the arrival on our family television of Channel 4! Watching it, as a kid, taught me more about life than school ever did; it changed my life. And since its arrival, it has continued to change lives, almost always, if you believe broadening people's horizons and championing the underdog is a good thing, for the better.

Channel 4 has been one of the most positive additions to the cultural landscape of this country for the past four decades, and it continues to be so. Who else has been so committed to foregrounding LGBT Rights? Black Lives? The Paralympics? And who else has done so with such charm, humour and panache to such a broad slice of the country? The ability to do this is built on the independence and confidence C4 gains from being a publicly owned.

Channel 4 doesn't always get it right, it treads a difficult line, and faces big challenges from the way viewing habits are changing. But in the ongoing debate about morality in the media, it's very much on the side of angels. It's there to stand up for those who haven't been given a fair crack of the whip, precisely because, at its core, it's driven by something other than making money; it is there to entertain and enlighten, but it's also underpinned by a sense of fairness and injustice. These are values that are more important than ever. They are something we should cherish and protect.

Channel 4 is unique. You don't realise just how unique until you travel around the world and watch the stuff other viewers have to endure. There's no channel like it on the planet. To lose something so special, so full of fun and creativity, to the moral vacuum of privatisation would be a dreadful and needless act of cultural self-harm and something we will hugely regret.

Inspired more than anything else by the programmes I watched on C4 growing up, I've spent the last 20 years making documentaries and popular factual shows as a freelance Producer/Director and Series Editor for the BBC, ITV and Channel 4. I've made programmes about homelessness, drug addiction, racial integration, the work of the RNLI and joblessness, among many other subjects. I've got a vested personal interest in seeing C4 and its values protected, as I want to continue to make (hopefully) entertaining programmes which will

(hopefully) make people think differently about the world. But I also reckon the same is true for everyone else in the country too. It's in everyone's interests to see Channel 4 protected, because if it ceases to exist in its current unique form, we will all lose something really distinctive and important.

Why would you want to threaten something which changes lives, broadens minds and makes the country a better and more hopeful place for people to live in?

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