



“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”

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Hollywood Gets Low Diversity Rating

The first detailed study of the relationship between diversity and the bottom line in the Hollywood entertainment industry has found that although diversity pays – literally – people of color and women are still woefully underrepresented throughout film and television.

The study titled, “2014 Hollywood Diversity Report: Making Sense of the Disconnect,” was conducted by the Ralph J. Bunch Center for African-American Studies at UCLA. It looked at 172 theatrical films released in 2011 and 1,061 television shows that aired during the 2011-12 season. It looked at race and gender and key production roles, including cast diversity, the show’s creator, the writer, the director, awards and domestic and international box office.

Frequent moviegoers represent just 10 percent of the population, but purchase half of all movie tickets, the report stated.

“It is important to note here that minorities are overrepresented among the ranks of frequent moviegoers, those who contribute most to overall box office,” it said. “In 2011, minorities accounted for 44.1 percent of frequent moviegoers, a figure that exceeded their 36.3 percent share of the overall U.S. population.”

But you wouldn’t know it by the roles people of color play in the industry.

“Historically, there has been a death of gender, racial, and ethnic diversity in film and television – both in front of and behind the camera,” the report stated. “This reality has meant limited access to



THE CURRY REPORT

George E. Curry

employment for women and minorities and to a truncating of the domain of media images available for circulation in contemporary society...Media images contribute greatly to how we think about ourselves in relation to others.

‘Historically, there has been a death of gender, racial, and ethnic diversity in film and television’

“When marginalized groups in society are absent from stories a nation tells about itself, or when media images are rooted primarily in stereotype, inequity is normalized and is more likely to be reinforced over time through our prejudices and practices.”

The report found that although people of color represent 36.3 percent of the population, in film:

Of the 172 films examined for 2011, only 10.5 percent of the lead roles were played by people of color and most of them were in such Black-targeted movies as “Jumping the Broom” and Tyler Perry’s “Madea’s Big Happy Family.” Women, who make up 51.2 percent of the population, were

cast as leads in only 25.6 percent of the movies.

Over half of the films (51.2 percent) featured casts in which minorities were 10 percent or less.

People of color directed 12.2 percent of the films studied, most directed at a targeted audience. Women directed 4.1 percent of the films.

Minorities wrote 7.6 percent of the films, mostly ethnic-niche films; women wrote 14.1 percent.

In television: People of color were in only 5.1 percent of the lead roles

Women accounted for 51.5 percent of the lead roles in comedies and dramas, matching their share of the population.

People of color accounted for 15.4 percent of the broadcast reality shows.

Of show creators, only one was a person of color – who created “Grey’s Anatomy,” “Private Practice” and “Scandal,” all on ABC.

The report proves that diversity pays.

“...The 25 films that were from 21 percent to 30 percent minority posted a median global box office of \$160.1 million – a figure considerably higher than the medians for all other diversity levels,” the report found. “By contrast, the 88 films that fell into the 10 percent minority or less interval did not fare as well in terms of global box office, posting a median figure of

\$68.5 million.”

The report added, “If we consider return on investment, which factors a film’s budget into the analysis, we see a similar pattern.” In fact, the return on more diverse films was “significantly greater,” the report found.

Yet, Hollywood continues to travel down the same old tired road.

“The 2014 Hollywood Diversity Report has documented an apparent disconnect between the industry’s professed focus on the bottom line and actual staffing practices in film, broadcast television, and cable,” the report stated. “That is, while films and television shows with casts that reflect the nation’s racial and ethnic diversity were more likely to post high box office figures or ratings during the study period, minorities and women were nonetheless woefully underrepresented among the corps of directors, show creators, writers, and lead actors that animates industry productions.”

The report concluded, “This disconnect does not bode well for the future of the Hollywood industry. Women already constitute slightly more than half of the U.S. population, and more than a third of the population is currently minority and the population continues to diversity at a dizzying rate.

“The bottom line for the Hollywood industry – theatrical film, broadcast television, and cable – would be advanced by implementing forward-looking project development and staffing practices that are in sync with these changes.”

President Acts for Student Loan Borrowers

With outstanding student loans totaling more than \$1 trillion and still counting, the White House and Congress have proposed measures to ease the financial burden now borne by 25 million borrowers.

At the White House on June 9, President Obama endorsed Senate and House bills that would allow student loan borrowers to refinance their loans into lower interest rates. He also directed the Department of Education to begin a public rulemaking procedure to expand the most generous income-based repayment options to an estimated 5 million more borrowers.

The new “Pay as You Earn Program” limits monthly loan payments to no more than 10 percent of income and forgives any remaining money owed after 20 years of payments. It is also expected to save the average student loan borrower \$2,000 over the life of the loans.

President Obama said, “I’m only here because this country gave me a chance at higher education with help in the form of loans, grants and scholarships. This is why I feel so strongly about this.”

The president also directed the secretaries of Education and Treasury to find new and innovative ways to best serve students and taxpayers, while ensuring that distressed borrowers learn about



RESPONSIBLE LENDING

Charlene Crowell

repayment options available to them. Treasury and Education will also work together to educate students, families, financial aid administrators and tax preparers to ensure that all consumers better understand and receive the educa-

‘I’m only here because this country gave me a chance at higher education with help in the form of loans, grants and scholarships’

tion tax benefits for which they are eligible. The two departments will also create a pilot program to investigate improved loan counseling.

A new report, co-authored by the White House Domestic Policy Council and the Council of Economic Advisers, underscored why loan refinancing is urgently needed. The report states, “Over the past three decades, the average tuition at a public and four-year college

has more than tripled, while a typical family’s income has barely budged. More students than ever are relying on loans to pay for college.

“Income-driven repayment plans, like the President’s new ‘Pay as You Earn Program’ can be effective tools to help individuals manage their debt and avoid the consequences of defaulting on a Federal student loan, especially for borrowers whose college investment has yet to deliver its full benefit,” the report noted.

Meanwhile in the Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) drew

support for her bill enabling student loan debt to be refinanced at lowered market interest rates. Entitled the Bank on Students Emergency Loan Refinancing Act (S. 2432), it was introduced in early May and gained 39 co-sponsors.

The measure was also supported by 30 national and state organizations, including the Center for Responsible Lending (CRL). Spanning organized labor to edu-

cators, mortgage bankers and youth advocates and others, the broad coalition sought to influence the Senate floor vote scheduled for Wednesday, June 11, just days following the President’s actions.

Despite this broad and diverse advocacy, the Senate invoked its procedural cloture vote instead of allowing the bill a full vote on its merits. The cloture vote failed to reach the necessary 60-vote threshold that would cut off debate.

In response to the filibuster actions, Senator Warren acknowledged the bipartisan support the measure has and vowed to continue fighting for passage. Additionally, Sen Tom Harkin (R-Iowa), chair of the Senate’s Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee termed the June 11 vote as “only a first step.”

“We’re not giving up. We still have 40 million Americans out there who are trying to deal with \$1.2 trillion in student debt,” said Warren. “We’re going to prove that Washington can work for American families. . . .What the people care about is getting a fair shot and we are going to give it to them.”

Maura Dundon, CRL senior policy counsel posed a key question, “The ability to refinance is something we take for granted in other consumer credit. Why treat students differently?”