

SHEILA JACKSON LEE
18TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

WASHINGTON OFFICE
2160 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-3816

DISTRICT OFFICE
1919 SMITH STREET, SUITE 1180
THE GEORGE "MICKEY" LELAND FEDERAL BUILDING
HOUSTON, TX 77002
(713) 655-0050

ACRES HOME OFFICE
6719 WEST MONTGOMERY, SUITE 204
HOUSTON, TX 77019
(713) 691-4882

HEIGHTS OFFICE
420 WEST 19TH STREET
HOUSTON, TX 77008
(713) 961-4070

FIFTH WARD OFFICE
4303 LYONS AVENUE, SUITE 200
HOUSTON, TX 77020
(713) 227-7740

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

COMMITTEES:
JUDICIARY

SUBCOMMITTEES:
COURTS, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND THE INTERNET
IMMIGRATION AND BORDER SECURITY

HOMELAND SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEES

RANKING MEMBER
BORDER AND MARITIME SECURITY
TRANSPORTATION SECURITY

SENIOR VICE
DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE OF TEXAS

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

HEARING ON:

“DIVERSITY IN AMERICA:

“REPRESENTATION OF PEOPLE OF COLOR IN THE MEDIA”

2141 RAYBURN

2:30 P.M.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2020



- Thank you, Chairman Cohen and Ranking Member Jordan, for convening this important hearing on “*Diversity in America: The Representation of People of Color in the Media*” to examine the current state of the representation of people of color in the media (both behind and in front of the camera), highlight the importance of media representation and the negative impacts of underrepresentation, and to discuss concrete steps media companies can take to improve representation.
- Let me thank our witnesses for their helpful testimony and assistance:

1. **Erika Alexander**, Actress, Writer, and Producer;
2. **Edward James Olmos**, Actor, Producer, and Director;
3. **Daniel Dae Kim**, Actor and Producer;
4. **Joy Villa**, Recording Artist, Actor, and Author;
5. **Jason Whitlock**, Sports Journalist;
6. **Dr. Stacy L. Smith**, Founder and Director, the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative at the Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism at the University of Southern California; and
7. **Karyn A. Temple**, Senior Executive Vice President and Global General Counsel, Motion Picture Association, Inc.

- This hearing will examine the current state of the representation of people of color in the media, both behind and in front of the camera; highlight the importance of media representation and the potential negative impacts of underrepresentation; and to discuss concrete steps media companies can take to improve representation.
- Across most industries, racial and ethnic minorities are underrepresented in leadership positions; for example, racial and ethnic minorities hold just 12.5% of positions on corporate boards, despite being 40% of the total population.
- Such underrepresentation among those in positions of authority may have ripple effects throughout their industries as a result of the decisions they make, about everything from hiring and working conditions to the messages their business convey to the public.
- People of color accounted for only 27% of leads in nearly 150 major films despite the success of movies with diverse leads and casts, like *Black Panther*, *Coco*, *Crazy Rich Asians*, *Hustlers*, and *Us*.
- While this number has almost tripled from 10.5% in 2011, it does not match the 40% that minorities represent in the U.S. population.
- This disparity between film portrayals and demographic reality persists despite trends in viewership and spending that point to higher profitability and return on investment on films that feature large minority casts.

- Movies with 41% to 50% minority characters had the highest global box office receipts of all top films in 2019, and movies with majority-minority casts had the highest median return on investments.
- By contrast, films with the most racially and ethnically homogenous casts grossed the least at the box office.
- Yet, films with a minority lead actor receive, on average, less money than those with a white lead.
- In a potentially positive development, earlier this month, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced new criteria that will require films hoping to qualify for the best picture Oscars category, beginning in 2024, to meet specific diversity standards in front of and behind the camera.
- In the television industry, shows like *Atlanta*, *Empire*, *Jane the Virgin*, *Ugly Betty*, *Fresh off the Boat*, and *Blackish* are a testament to the diverse opportunities that television offers.
- But, Mr. Chairman, there remains a racial discrepancy between those who watch shows on television and streaming services and those who are cast and whose stories are told.
- The Comprehensive Annenberg Report on Diversity analyzed more than 300 shows released from 2014 to 2015.
- The report found that only 19% of broadcast network shows, 13% of cable shows, and 2% of streaming shows reflected the proportional representation of the U.S. population on the basis of race and ethnicity.
- The report's findings underscored the importance of having minorities behind the camera directing television shows, finding that the percentage of on-screen underrepresented characters increases 17.5% when an underrepresented director is at the helm of a scripted episode or film, from 26.2% of characters from underrepresented groups to 43.7%.

- Over the past 10 years streaming services like Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, and YouTube have become increasingly more popular, complementing or even substituting for traditional television.
- All of these streaming services have the ability to add to the diverse content that exists in the entertainment industry.
- Many see YouTube as a starting place for those both behind the scenes and in front of the camera.
- However, aspiring content creators often face difficulty breaking into a saturated video environment without existing networks of influence and capital.
- As Google points out, 70% of all YouTube views come from YouTube “recommended” videos.
- When looking at the top earners on YouTube, there is limited racial diversity among the talent.
- A 2016 article noted that 65% of the top 100 creators were white and 71% were male and YouTube’s affiliated sister company, Google, has been criticized over the racial differences of its search outcomes.
- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back my time.