

By All M.E.A.N.S. Necessary

Essential Practices for Transforming
Hollywood Diversity and Inclusion

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By All M.E.A.N.S. Necessary:

Essential Practices for Transforming Hollywood Diversity and Inclusion

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Table of Contents

Forewordvi

Executive Summary 1

Introduction2

The New Mainstream: The Case for Diversity3
Social and Cultural Significance..... 3
Economic Significance 3

Barriers to Inclusion and the Need for Diversity Initiatives5
Background 6

Study Methodology7

M.E.A.N.S. — Essential Practices7
Modernize Your Worldview 8
Expand the Net.....10
Amplify Women — Especially Women of Color 12
Normalize Compensation 13
Structure Incentives 15

Conclusion.....17

Endnotes 19

Foreword

The inspiration for this report came in 2017 when I moderated a panel for Univision at Sundance. On the panel were Geena Davis, Academy Award winner; Charles D. King, CEO of MACRO; Miguel Arteta, filmmaker; Danny Strong, Writer/Director and Christian Gabela, VP and General Manager of Univision's production unit Storyhouse. We asked the question, "Do artists and storytellers have a responsibility to reflect diversity as it exists in society?" It was a conversation that made me reflect on how far the diversity efforts in Hollywood have brought us and how far we still have to go. In recognition of the 20th anniversary of the infamous Hollywood White Out, it seemed like a good time to take stock and identify essential practices for diversity and inclusion that have been successful. Being an eternal optimist — because it seems to take an eternity for positive things to happen — I wanted to, as Alex Haley famously said, "Find the good and praise it."

I was going to use this forward to recount some of my personal adventures and accomplishments in the struggle for diversity in the entertainment industry. Instead I want to say thank you. I want to say thank you to Kweisi Mfume, former Congressman and past President of the NAACP, for establishing the Grand Coalition in reaction to the 1999 Hollywood White Out. I want to say thank you to the founding members of the Grand Coalition — Congressman Esteban Torres, Alex Nogales, Karen Narasaki, Guy Aoki and Sonny Skyhawk for negotiating the first of its kind Memorandum of Understanding with CBS, NBC, Fox and ABC to end the whitewash and to Norman Mineta, former United States Secretary of Transportation, for running interference.

I will be forever thankful to Julian Bond and Myrlie Evers-Williams for supporting me as the first Executive Director of the NAACP Hollywood Bureau. I want to thank Reverend Jesse Jackson, Reverend Al Sharpton and Mark Morial for always answering the call. I want to thank Paula Madison, Mitsy Wilson, Josie Thomas, Carmen Smith, Bob Mendez, Tim McNeal and Ron Taylor for answering the call and becoming some of the first diversity executives in Hollywood. These executives developed and championed many of the programs and initiatives that we build on today.

I want to thank those who are standing up today pushing the diversity and inclusion agenda forward — Ava DuVernay, Robert Rodriguez, Viola Davis, Julius Tennon, Ryan Coogler, Kathleen Kennedy, Dawn Hudson, Donna Langley, Casey Bloys, Michael Lombardo, Adam Fogelson, Mark Gordon, David Linde, Michael B. Jordan, Frances McDormand, Lori McCreary, Morgan Freeman, America Ferrera, Eva Longoria, J.J. Abrams, Oprah Winfrey, Tyler Perry, Bob Johnson, Debra Lee, Kathy Hughes, Byron Allen, Shonda Rhimes, Paul Lee, Glen Mazzara, Kiko Washington, Craig Robinson, Nina Shaw, Cheryl Boone Isaacs, Bettina Fisher, Kelly Edwards, Tery Lopez, Franklin Leonard, Karen Horne, Frank Gonzales, Dr. Stacy Smith, Dean Elizabeth Daley, Dean Teri Schwartz, Dr. Ernest Wilson, Dean Susan Ruskin, Deborah Langford, Gil Robertson, Ben Lopez, and Robin Harrison.

I want to thank our advisory committee — David White, Vance Van Petten, Maury McIntyre, Peggy Bustamante, Dr. Brian Harke, and Felix Sanchez. I also want to thank Mariela Azcuy and Tonia O'Connor for their support of this report and their commitment to moving the needle forward.

I especially want to thank Dr. Darnell Hunt and Dr. Ana-Christina Ramón for overseeing this report. Their intellectual integrity and tenacity reminds us that, "We didn't come this far to only come this far."

I mention this litany of names because it is important to remember that there is no progress unless individuals bravely step forward.

So, last but not least, I want to thank everyone who reads this report and is inspired to help make the entertainment industry reflect the world, not only as it is, but as we would like to imagine it to be. Thankfully that list of names grows every day. Forgive me if you are part of the struggle and I have not mentioned you. Know that the world owes you a debt of gratitude.

Thank you,

Vicangelo Bulluck

Chair, Advisory Committee

Executive Summary

Diversity initiatives have become their own cottage industry in the entertainment industry. But how much do we really know about what has been working and why? This report considers some of the more significant past and present diversity initiatives in the industry in order to zero in on the essential practices that seem to differentiate the successful programs from those which are less successful. Toward this end, we interviewed nearly two dozen industry leaders for this report who currently work on the frontline of efforts to make Hollywood a more diverse and inclusive creative space. Their insights give rise to a M.E.A.N.S. model of essential practices already employed in isolated pockets of Hollywood that can be transferred throughout the entire industry.

Five key strategies comprise the M.E.A.N.S. model: *MODERNIZE* your worldview to reflect changing U.S. demographics; *EXPAND* the net in routine talent searches; *AMPLIFY* the voices of women, especially women of color, within organizations; *NORMALIZE* compensation practices to reduce barriers to entry for marginalized groups; and *STRUCTURE* incentives for decision makers to prioritize diversity and inclusion. Action items associated with each essential practice are outlined in this report.

Despite audience yearnings for change, the history of diversity efforts in Hollywood suggests that the industry's diversity problem will not simply correct itself. The path forward must be paved with intentions — by industry decision makers who actively embrace the means necessary for achieving the end of a more inclusive creative space.

Essential Practices:

1. *MODERNIZE your worldview to reflect changing U.S. demographics*
2. *EXPAND the net in routine talent searches*
3. *AMPLIFY the voices of women, especially women of color, within organizations*
4. *NORMALIZE compensation practices to reduce barriers to entry for marginalized groups*
5. *STRUCTURE incentives for decision makers to prioritize diversity and inclusion.*



Introduction

In response to pressure from the NAACP and a coalition of media and social justice organizations at the close of the 1990s, major television networks and studios created an array of diversity initiatives aimed at addressing the systematic exclusion of people of color and women in the television and film industries. In recent years, independent media organizations have joined these efforts by creating talent development programs designed to eliminate entrance barriers and financial obstacles for applicants from underrepresented groups.

Access to diversity programs is highly competitive, with only a handful of applicants typically selected for participation from thousands of submissions. Most programs do not guarantee employment post tenure but are nonetheless highly sought after for the invaluable networking opportunities they provide with studio executives, showrunners, and other entertainment industry decision makers.

Critics of existing diversity initiatives have underscored the limitations of these programs — including perceptions that the “diversity hires” they produce are less qualified,¹ the alienation and tokenization “diversity hires” face in white-dominated workplace cultures, and, most importantly, the failure of such initiatives thus far to significantly impact the abysmal industry inclusion statistics routinely presented in studies of industry diversity.²

In the final analysis, however, longstanding diversity initiatives have undoubtedly made a difference in that

industry shortcomings would have been much more pronounced without them. But if the goal is to actually make *significant* progress, a major shift in thinking is required that resets the industry’s approach to the problem.

People of color currently constitute nearly 40 percent of the U.S. population, and this share is increasing by about half a percent each year.³ Indeed, within a couple of decades, the United States will be a majority-minority nation.⁴ Women as a group continue to account for slightly more than half of the population. And though reliable data are harder to come by for the employment statistics of other marginalized groups in society such as LGBTQ+ persons and persons with disabilities, anecdotal evidence suggests that they are similarly underrepresented in the entertainment industry.

Rather than think of diversity and inclusion work as primarily rooted in a lottery system of pipeline initiatives that benefits just a few of the thousands of talented candidates from these underrepresented groups, diversity and inclusion work needs to be grounded in a demographic restructuring of the entertainment industry’s organizations from top to bottom. This move, of course, will require widespread acceptance of the idea that diversity and inclusion is absolutely essential to the bottom line. And those in decision-making positions must be clear on what types of interventions will most likely make a difference.

The New Mainstream: The Case for Diversity

“We are, as a species, addicted to story. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories.”

— Jonathan Gottschall⁵

Social and Cultural Significance

Since the early 20th century, we have relied upon theatrical film and television as key forums to share stories with one another that both entertain the world and define our humanity. While entertaining, films and TV are not *just* entertainment. Media, especially television, act as powerful agents of socialization that define how the world works and our place in it.

In our culture, media consumption has become an essential part of our daily lives. Though people might say they know the difference between reality and entertainment, research shows that media socialization often happens in subtle and covert ways. What you see on television or in film often becomes a part of your memory and thus a part of your life experience.⁶ You may think that after watching numerous police procedurals, you know enough about the criminal justice system — about what constitutes “justice” — without ever having direct experience of the consequences. Why would this happen? Research shows that the repetition of ideas within compelling, fictional narratives often leads to acceptance of these ideas, even absent concrete evidence from your personal experiences in the physical world. This is called the illusory truth effect.⁷

As researchers O’Guinn and Shrum summarize, “Our extensive use of and reliance on television allows us to believe that we know how others, with whom we may rarely have significant direct contact, live and consume.”⁸ Unfortunately, this can also have a negative effect. Gerbner and Gross’s Cultivation Theory suggests that increased TV viewing may lead to distorted ideas about reality and work to perpetuate stereotypes.⁹ Racial and ethnic minorities are particularly vulnerable to these distortions. For

example, a 2016 study from Columbia University found that Latinos continue to be represented in limited ways — as criminals, law enforcers, and blue-collar workers (e.g., janitors and maids).¹⁰ When they’re cast as criminals, it is worth noting, Latinos are often portrayed as gang members.

Stereotypical portrayals like these, which reduce marginalized groups to a few dehumanizing characteristics, are obviously problematic in a complex, democratic society dependent upon groups understanding and getting along with one another.

But what about when a group is rarely represented at all? Gerbner and Gross note that if “representation in the fictional world signifies social existence; absence means symbolic annihilation.”¹¹ In short, there are compelling social and political reasons for why Hollywood needs to be more reflective of the reality of an increasingly diverse America.

Economic Significance

But Hollywood is popularly known as “show business” for a reason, and increasing access and representation for marginalized groups also makes powerful economic sense. According to a 2018 report from the University of Georgia, the buying power¹² of minority groups has risen exponentially since 2000.¹³ Latinos are considered the largest minority market, with nearly one in five people in the United States identifying as of Hispanic origin. The gain in the Latino market buying power is twice that of overall buying power since 2000. In 2017, Latino market buying power was \$1.5 trillion, followed by \$1.3 trillion for African Americans, \$986 billion for Asian Americans and \$114 billion Native Americans, respectively. The result? Today’s “mainstream” market is defined by its remarkable and increasing diversity.



It follows that people of color are also avid moviegoers¹⁴ and have had a profound impact on the success of Hollywood's top films. In 2017, for example, people of color accounted for the majority of domestic ticket buyers for five of the top ten films, ranked by global box office. Moreover, people of color bought half of the tickets for one of the remaining five top ten films that year. It is worth noting that seven of the top ten films had casts that were 21 percent or more diverse.¹⁵

UCLA's annual *Hollywood Diversity Report* series has consistently found that despite the stark underrepresentation of women and people of color in the industry, diversity sells at the box office.¹⁶ Today's audiences are receptive to (and demand) fresh stories and racially and ethnically diverse leads at the movies. A recent example that illustrates this truth is *The Fate of the Furious* (2017). Featuring a racially and ethnically diverse cast and a director of color, the eighth installment of the franchise had the best global opening of any film in franchise history (\$532.5 million), and its domestic audience was majority (59 percent) non-white.¹⁷ Led by Vin Diesel, a mixed-race actor, the franchise has grossed over \$5 billion worldwide.¹⁸ Other recent examples of the bottom-line power of diversity include Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther* (2018),

which has become the highest grossing superhero movie of all time (\$1.35 billion as of September 2019),¹⁹ Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017),²⁰ which didn't scare audiences away with its R-rating and focus on race, and Jon Chu's *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018),²¹ the first major Hollywood film to feature a majority Asian cast since the *Joy Luck Club* more than two decades ago.

Meanwhile, today's audiences are also very savvy and sensitive to inauthentic casting or "whitewashing."²² *Ghost in the Shell*, a film based on a Japanese comic and numerous anime adaptations, received negative attention once news circulated that the lead character — who is Japanese in the original story — would be portrayed by the White actress Scarlett Johansson. The movie grossed only \$40.6 million in the United States, despite a budget of \$110 million.²³ Similarly, *Gods of Egypt* endured a backlash for its predominantly white cast portraying the Egyptian gods. In response, Lionsgate and its director was forced to apologize for ethnically-inaccurate casting.²⁴ With a budget of \$140 million, the movie ultimately grossed just \$31.2 million in the United States.²⁵

Similar patterns are evident in television. Although there are now competing digital platforms to pull people away from conventional television programming, it continues to be the top medium

through which people view media content in the U.S.²⁶ Almost all U.S. households own at least one TV set, adults spend more hours watching TV than any other medium,²⁷ and Black adults watch more hours of television than any other racial or ethnic group.²⁸

Univision's *Diversity in Media Study*²⁹ found that viewers want more inclusiveness, especially millennials. Among the top ten things that adults 18-34 would change about TV and movies today, *more diversity* checked in at number four. Two of the remaining top four answers — *better actors/character/storyline* and *fewer remakes/more originality* — would also be advanced by an industry that prioritizes including voices that traditionally have been marginalized. In short, younger Americans are even more racially and ethnically diverse than the overall population and they demand diverse content — no matter where they view it.

The most recent *Hollywood Diversity Report* found that when examining TV ratings by race of household, shows with racially and ethnically diverse casts generally appealed to both white and minority viewers. During the 2016-2017 TV season, for example, eight of the top ten broadcast scripted shows among viewers 18-49 had casts that were at least 21 percent minority.³⁰ Majority-minority cast shows such as *Empire* (Fox) and *Designated Survivor* (ABC) did not turn off White audiences — as is often assumed by industry decision-makers — and were universally appealing.

In short, the data clearly show that racially and ethnically diverse talent combined with authentic stories is an especially potent and profitable mix for the new mainstream. Today's audiences, in both film and television, are active players who are increasingly flexing their muscles — at the box office and through viewer ratings — to influence what is profitable across all media platforms.

Barriers to Inclusion and the Need for Diversity Initiatives

UCLA's *Hollywood Diversity Report* series argues that part of the entertainment industry's race and gender problem may lie in a latent conflict between individual and institutional interests.³¹ Industry employment can be incredibly lucrative for individuals privileged enough to have it. Because of the high risk associated with the typical project, individual stakeholders in the industry (typically White and male) look to surround themselves with other individuals with whom they feel comfortable, and with whom they assume they personally have the best prospects for producing a successful project. Their reluctance to share decision-making opportunities and authority with women and people of color creates an industry

culture that routinely devalues the talent of these underrepresented groups. Similar feelings and assumptions often preclude the serious consideration of talent from other underrepresented groups — such as LGBTQ+ talent and talent with disabilities — which limits the diversity of voices in the room.

Institutional interests thus suffer as revenue is left on the table due to the failure of business as usual to provide for increasingly racially and ethnically diverse audiences the kinds of inclusive storytelling they really want. Despite signs in recent years that the industry may be opening up a bit to talent that is racially and ethnically diverse (primarily in front of the camera), many of the barriers to access remain, which explains

why the progress observed in industry reports has scarcely kept pace with the continuing diversification of the U.S. population and audiences.

Background

In response to the announcement of a 1999-2000 television season featuring no leads of color among the new shows, the NAACP spurred an industry-wide campaign to address inequalities in representation and opportunity. The resulting 1999 Memorandum of Understanding was the landmark effort of this campaign. Signed by the major broadcast television networks and advocacy groups representing the major minority communities, the watershed Memorandum established the intent to improve opportunities for people of color in Hollywood. Including the launching of diversity executive positions, financial incentives, and race-blind spec script reading, the memorandum mandated formal reporting of diversity hiring practices and the development of diversity programs and initiatives that still operate today.³² These original diversity initiatives now extend beyond race and ethnicity to encompass gender, sexuality, age, and ability.³³

As diversity programs have become a ubiquitous industry standard in the past two decades, these initiatives have drawn both acclaim and criticism. Critics of existing diversity programs point to three main shortcomings of these programs: 1) the lack of an employment guarantee; 2) the common tokenization experiences of “diversity hires;”³⁴ and 3) the failure to significantly improve inclusion statistics.³⁵

Nevertheless, these longstanding diversity programs have indisputably made a difference by creating points of access into the industry that would not have otherwise existed. Diversity program supporters particularly praise the networking opportunities presented to participants of these highly competitive programs.

In this sense, existing diversity programs that emerged from the 1999 Memorandum of Understanding have largely achieved what they were set up to do — to create opportunities that did not exist before and to begin to move the needle marking the degree of industry diversity and inclusion in a positive direction. Undoubtedly, 2019 Hollywood is a far cry from 1999 Hollywood with respect to diversity and inclusion. But the United States and its audiences have also become considerably more racially and ethnically diverse over the 20-year period, which has raised the stakes for the entertainment industry in its efforts to catch up with a diversifying America.

Meanwhile, digital platforms continue to democratize content creation, circulation, and access beyond the traditional studio system. Increasing access to technology — most prominently the access to cameras via smartphones — continues to break down barriers to production,³⁶ while creators are able to build audience bases for web series on platforms like YouTube.³⁷ With increased access to the means of producing independent content and reaching audiences, the pool of visible talent has never been more expansive. Additionally, the rise of streaming platforms has created an unprecedented number of new jobs in the industry on every level. Paired with the ever-growing visibility of new talent, the rising digital landscape of the entertainment industry offers new opportunities for inclusive and representative productions and content.

As the necessity and value of creating a diverse and inclusive Hollywood comes into sharper focus, more industry players are seeking concrete practices that take their efforts beyond conversation and into action. This report seeks to equip organizations with the essential tools for taking concrete actions toward what one Hollywood critic has called “the righting of a wrong.”³⁸

Study Methodology

In order to identify essential practices necessary for increasing diversity and inclusion in the Hollywood entertainment industry, we interviewed 21 entertainment industry leaders who have personal experience with these efforts. The study participants included network/studio/production company executives, union representatives, and talent agency representatives.³⁹ They work across a range of major film and television studios, networks, talent agencies, guilds, and academies that are associated with one or more successful diversity initiatives.

In this study, we define “successful” diversity initiatives as those identified by multiple sources — including

study participants unaffiliated with the initiatives — as actually producing significant increases in the employment of traditionally marginalized groups in the industry. All participants were assured that their responses would be anonymous in order to encourage as much openness as possible during the interviews. The interviews were conducted over a six-and-a-half-week period in June and July 2018. The insights from these interviews were compared to findings from other reports about industry diversity and related background documents, which facilitated our distillation of key essential practices that have made a difference.

M.E.A.N.S. — Essential Practices

Our interviews with industry leaders and related analysis of successful diversity programs revealed several essential practices for advancing inclusion and diversity for marginalized groups in the entertainment industry. From the perspective of an individual organization, each of these practices should be thought of as partially dependent upon the others and thus singularly insufficient.

There is no silver bullet for solving Hollywood’s longstanding diversity and inclusion problem. Instead, organizations truly committed to change must holistically address the problem with a toolkit of practices. We outline these essential practices with the M.E.A.N.S. model: *modernize* your worldview; *expand* the net; *amplify* women, particularly women of color; *normalize* compensation; and *structure* incentives.



If Hollywood storytelling is to become a truer reflection of a diversifying American mainstream, the industry must widely adopt these means as part of a new normal. We discuss the importance of each practice below.

Modernize Your Worldview

Accounting for 40 percent and more than 50 percent of the U.S. population, respectively, people of color and women can no longer be considered niche markets. Both groups currently define the new mainstream, and the population share of people of color is growing by half a percentage point each year. Studios and production companies must reflect this growing reality by including people of color and women at all levels of the organization, from those handling routine administrative activities to the suites of executive decision-making. It is important to modernize your worldview first by recognizing the need for diversity, and then by having leadership directly communicate that need throughout the organization.

Diversity and inclusion have to be seen as a business imperative. One talent agency representative we interviewed for this report noted that his/her company understands the importance of diversity as a business imperative. “It’s not just about attracting talent. It’s our clients [who] expect that—our clients are diverse. They’re expecting two important things from us: that we are advocating on their behalf, and getting [talent from underrepresented groups] in the writers’ room, or in front of the camera. I think if we were to devalue that, it would impact our business...”

Indeed, research shows that diverse companies are generally more profitable. McKinsey & Company’s 2018 report replicated findings from earlier reports showing that companies enjoy above-average profits when there is gender diversity at the management level. Similarly, the report revealed that companies with culturally and ethnically diverse executive teams and boards of directors were more likely to see above-average profits.⁴⁰

So, how can a company show it values diversity and inclusion? Research shows that when implementing these types of initiatives, *clear and persuasive communication from the very top of the organization*

*is needed to ensure support at all levels.*⁴¹ A studio executive we interviewed discussed how important it is to clearly establish diversity and inclusion as “standard operating procedure:” “‘What’s important to us is that you cast diverse, you staff your writing room diverse, you have diversity below and above the line, and it’s critically important to the mission...’ This is what they need to hear. ‘And we’re gonna work closely with you to achieve it.’ That should be standard operating procedure.”

One way to communicate this commitment is to *establish a publicly visible diversity statement to which everyone feels accountable.* A recent example and the first of its kind for the entertainment industry is the statement released by WarnerMedia, which reads in part: “For our part, WarnerMedia pledges to use our best efforts to ensure that diverse actors and crew members are considered for film, television and other projects, and to work with directors and producers who also seek to promote greater diversity and inclusion in our industry.”⁴² An example of a Fortune 500 company outside the entertainment industry that clearly states its commitment to diversity and inclusion is Johnson & Johnson. This successful multinational corporation, which has been recognized for its inclusive efforts, firmly defines its commitment to diversity as follows: “...to make diversity and inclusion our way of doing business. We will advance our culture of belonging where open hearts and minds combine to unleash the potential of the brilliant mix of people, in every corner of Johnson & Johnson.”⁴³

Once the statement is made, a company or organization must take action. It must *specify the frame for what constitutes success by setting specific diversity and inclusion goals, as well as timeframes for achieving these goals.*⁴⁴ For example, Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff stated in 2015 that he wanted to employ an equal number of men and women by 2020.⁴⁵ In the entertainment industry, attaining gender parity by 2020 has been pledged by ICM Partners in its staff and leadership roles and by CAA in its management committee and board of directors.⁴⁶ Specific pledges hold everyone accountable and provide a goal to work towards. For example, one production company executive we interviewed discussed the reason and the manner in which this was implemented at their company.

“[Our policy] is fifty percent of every job needs to have women candidates — every opening — and 40 percent need to be people of color ... And that was not because we decided we were going to have a quota for hiring. It was because we just needed to see a broader sort of swath of candidates, and once we did we saw all these different, all this talent ... And so, our hiring is always ‘Who’s the best person for the job?’ But our recruitment is ‘We need to see everybody who’s out there.’ So, that was a game-changer for us. And that’s sort of how we think about it, which is it shouldn’t feel like spinach. It should feel like an exciting business opportunity. And we know that it has changed our business in only ways that are deeper, richer, and more creative.”

Additionally, leadership must *affirm that change is inevitable*⁴⁷ and that it benefits the employee and the company/organization. This affirmation may help motivate those who are resistant to change and otherwise committed to the status quo. A studio executive we interviewed pointed out that companies need to understand that resisting change is not an option in today’s environment: “The number of roles at companies [in] inclusion has grown by something like 30 percent plus, which is pretty big. And I think companies are recognizing...[that] the workforce.... is changing. If you look at the US population, the US population is changing. So companies need to figure it out. It’s not an option.” Besides the benefit to the bottom line, another studio executive we interviewed pointed out the recruiting benefits that accrue when a company shows it values diversity:

“As companies prepare for [demographic] shifts in the workplace and having to create a workplace that is different from the traditional corporate structures. I think as younger employees are coming into companies, they are more concerned maybe than my generation or the generation before me was about what is this company’s values. What kind of experience will I have when I get there? What’s the culture like? And if it doesn’t align with their points of view, they’re not going to pursue that opportunity. So companies really have to think about who are we — ‘What’s going to make our business successful in the 21st century and beyond?’ — and adapt.”

To be sure, the 2018 McKinsey & Company report noted that “ethnic/cultural diversity at the highest levels of company leadership could serve as a signal to employees and other stakeholders that the organization truly understands and values the community and customers that they serve.”⁴⁸

As part of the concerted effort to increase diversity and inclusion at all levels, companies should *mandate carefully vetted, unconscious bias training for top management, then roll out the program to the entire workforce*. As Professor Calvin K. Lai notes, “Unconscious bias training has become a popular approach to diversity education. The trainings often begin with demonstrations of how the mind operates in ways that are outside of conscious awareness or control. These demonstrations show that people make, and sometimes act on, snap judgments based on the other person’s race, without any conscious intention.”⁴⁹ One studio executive we interviewed put it this way:

“I think that one of the efforts that we’re doing that...has the potential to be enormously impactful...is unconscious bias training. Because it is unconscious, it’s a part of all of us. We all have biases. ... We’re doing...unconscious bias training...starting at the very top... Our senior executives are taking...hours of classes..., [which] is something that I certainly wouldn’t have seen that 10 years ago at all. And I don’t know how common it would have been five years ago, either. But again, in the wake of everything that’s gone on in the past five years from Black Lives Matter to #MeToo to everything in between, that imperative, I think, has been recognized...at least by our leadership.”

In addition to creating or increasing awareness of unconscious bias through training, companies need to make sure they simultaneously are implementing ways to combat it. Salesforce, for example, addresses unconscious bias in its hiring process by increasing its awareness training and competence-based interviews and mandating that at least one woman or person of color candidate be considered in executive position interviews.⁵⁰

M. E. A. N. S. Essential Practices

- 1. Diversity and inclusion have to be seen as a business imperative.**
- 2. Clear and persuasive communication from the very top of the organization is needed to ensure support at all levels.**
- 3. Establish a publicly visible diversity statement to which everyone feels accountable.**
- 4. Specify the frame for what constitutes success by setting specific diversity and inclusion goals, as well as timeframes for achieving these goals.**
- 5. Affirm that change is inevitable and that it benefits the employee and the company/organization.**
- 6. Mandate carefully vetted, unconscious bias training for top management, then roll out the program to the entire workforce.**

Expand the Net

Hollywood is a highly competitive industry in which only a small share of potential projects actually makes it to the big or small screen. But in an industry where opportunity has historically been based on who you know, competition does not always breed excellence. The best talent does not always get to tell the story. In order to increase the likelihood of meeting the needs

of today's (and tomorrow's) diverse audiences, the net must be cast as widely as possible when recruiting talent and developing projects. Narrowly casting the net virtually ensures outcomes that will continue to marginalize underrepresented groups and their interests.

The industry should look beyond immediate referrals. A 2017 PayScale study found that "holding everything else constant, from job title to industry to location, female and minority applicants were much less likely to report receiving an employee referral than their white male counterparts. More specifically, white women were 12 [percent] less likely to receive a referral, men of color were 26 [percent] less likely and women of color were 35 [percent] less likely."⁵¹ One talent agency representative we interviewed noted that his/her agency tries to create a level playing field by conducting interviews via video:

"Because entertainment is a referral-based business, it's really hard to combat the bias that comes with referrals, because it's one person's best friend's daughter. And if that's an affluent hub in Brentwood, then you're gonna get one sort of homogeneous sort of lump of referrals. ... So, we now work with a[n]... agency where all of our agent trainee candidates are interviewed by video so that people aren't screened out because they can't...afford to travel. It gets a broader footprint of people. And even the referral who lives down the street and is the president of a studio's daughter will still be interviewed that same way as a first screening. And by doing that, we've been able to increase both the gender and racial diversity of the incoming classes. And I think things like that even the playing field."

Another studio executive we interviewed notes that there should be a blind consideration process. "Referrals are great," s/he noted. "But then let's have a blind consideration process. So, I don't know it's the COO's son. I just know it's X candidate and this is their experience and judge it on that. Judge it on their interview. Judge it on what they put in their thank you note if they write a thank you note." Meanwhile, a talent agency representative we interviewed pointed out that his/her agency actively recruits beyond referrals.

“Once a month we host 30 to 40 non-employees on campus, and sit ‘em in a variety of rooms for eight hours, have our CEO come in, have the head of talent come in, have an assistant who just started come in, and give ‘em a tour of the mailroom, and say, ‘Here you go.’ Like you don’t have to have a fancy resumé. You didn’t have to have your dad call to get you in. We have a really just open-door policy... And they were selected for that opportunity through that recruitment pool that’s open and inclusive, at which point they can put it on their resumé that they were selected to attend a [talent agency] event, which helps them get hired in future opportunities.”

Another way to go beyond immediate referrals and to be more proactive about finding talent from underrepresented groups is to *make use of existing online databases*, such as CAA’s Amplify Database that currently features TV writers of color⁵² and Women and Hollywood’s listing of databases for women in film.⁵³

Companies can also expand the net by *increasing outreach to universities and colleges that will be a part of a longer-term investment in a talent pipeline*. Most of the diversity programs at the studios and networks tour colleges to recruit new talent. One such program that recently launched is the Academy Gold Program at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.⁵⁴ It “...aims to boost inclusion in the film industry by exposing young people from underrepresented communities to various aspects of the film business through a range of workshops, panels and screenings that enable them to mix with established figures in the industry. At the conclusion of the internship, the students are paired for eight months with Academy members who serve as mentors to help get their careers off the ground.”⁵⁵ In only its second year, the Academy touts that over 50 percent of its interns attribute the program’s mentoring to helping them move forward in their young careers.⁵⁶

Companies and organizations can *create networks for underrepresented groups within the industry and outside in the community*. One union representative we interviewed described how his/her organization helps connect talent from underrepresented groups to those who can help them with their career:

“The purpose of the program was to introduce mid-level writers from underrepresented groups

to showrunners for them to consider during staffing season. In addition, to introduce them to network executives, both development and current execs, and also to representation — so agents and managers. Because what we found out is that a lot of our members, even though they’re members, they don’t have representation. If they haven’t worked in a while, they don’t have reps. So, during staffing season, if you don’t have somebody pushing your work, the probability of you getting hired is slim to none. Because in this town, everybody’s like, unless it was sent to me by an agent or a manager, I’m not even going to consider reading this.”

Companies can also *create events, mentoring sessions, and policies where cultural barriers can be broken down, and where talent from underrepresented groups can come together without being viewed through a single, limiting lens*. Indeed, some companies establish ERGs [Employee Resource Groups], “nonprofit groups that provide support, advocacy, education, mentoring, and more to groups such as women, generations, military veterans, people with disabilities, and members of the LGBT community.”⁵⁷ AT&T, for example, has fostered these types of groups and informal networks over the past decade, which has led to successful diversity and inclusion initiatives. These groups help create an inclusive company culture in which people feel heard and others can learn more about groups that differ from them. In addition, these groups ensure there is leadership involvement so that there are mentorship opportunities and role models available for participants from underrepresented groups.⁵⁸

Companies can also *work with their ERGs to create outreach programs and inclusion initiatives in their various communities*. One studio executive we interviewed discussed the importance of reaching out to these communities as a prelude to the talent search:

“In terms of hiring more mid-to-senior level, I think it’s about strengthening the network before the job is open. So...it’s not enough to say I need a new EVP of Legal. I think that the person who heads up Legal should be going to a BESLA event, the Black Entertainment Sports Lawyers Association event. They should be just out in

the community, getting to know people so when the job is open, it's not the same group of people that they go to. It's not like I worked with "Joe" at this company, so they're great, I'm bringing them in. That has to go away. Or just widen your Joes. You know? I mean that sincerely."

M. E. A. N. S. Essential Practices

1. *Look beyond immediate referrals.*
2. *Make use of existing online databases.*
3. *Increase outreach to universities and colleges that will be a part of a longer-term investment in a talent pipeline.*
4. *Create networks for underrepresented groups within the industry and outside in the community.*
5. *Create events, mentoring sessions, and policies where cultural barriers can be broken down, and where talent from underrepresented groups can come together without being viewed through a single, limiting lens.*
6. *Work with company ERGs to create outreach programs and inclusion initiatives in their various communities.*

Amplify Women — Especially Women of Color

Although women account for more than 50 percent of the U.S. population, the latest *Hollywood Diversity Report* found that among the top 200 films at the global box office in 2017, women made up only about 13 percent of directors and only 33 percent of leads. More specifically, only about 7 percent of the key roles went to Black women, about 2 percent to Latinas, and about 1 percent to Asian women.⁵⁹ Overall, the percentage of females on screen in film has not moved in decades.

These statistics make it clear that women must be placed in decision-making positions. Women of color define the intersection of two key marginalized groups in Hollywood: women and people of color. Amplifying the presence of women of color in leadership roles throughout the organization is one of the surest routes to making diversity and inclusion part of the organization's primary objectives. When these women occupy a leadership role, research shows that work environments and the projects produced are considerably more inclusive than when they do not.⁶⁰ A studio executive we interviewed emphasized this point: "... I think that it's true that a lot of women and specifically women of color directors tend to be more inclusive in terms of the people that they hire."

One way to implement this change is for top executives and content creators to *identify a woman of color who they are willing to personally sponsor and recommend for advancement in their organization*. One network executive we interviewed discussed how this can be done:

"Sponsorship is when you actually have someone speaking for you and touting you in a room that you're not present in... [M]entors are people who sit down and talk to you directly,...and they...give you advice... And so, you need to have inclusive sponsorships. You need to be sure that..., on senior levels, people are familiar enough with high-potential people of different ethnicities and women. And different abilities."

A prominent example of this type of sponsorship is the ReFrame Initiative created by Women In Film and the Sundance Institute. This initiative "provides nurturing mentors for protégés, who will have multiple industry

pros at companies situated across the industry. Top pros become staked in their careers, enough to put themselves on the hook as they vouch for that person when it's hiring time."⁶¹ Film director Paul Feig, who has been a sponsor, noted:

"This will take that sponsorship to a much bigger scale as people who are trusted in the industry vouch for those new voices who haven't gotten a shot. It is a very practical thing we can do to help feed the pipeline. This issue is finally being taken seriously and in our meetings with studios we can see they are looking for these people. This program goes beyond simple mentorship."⁶²

Creating a structured support system for women of color so they can thrive is also key. The *Women in the Workplace 2018* report finds that "...women of color are not only significantly underrepresented [in the workplace], they are far less likely than others to be promoted to manager, more likely to face everyday discrimination and less likely to receive support from their managers."⁶³ The union representatives interviewed in our study described how their programs have provided this support for women and people of color. As the intersection between two marginalized categories — women and people of color — it's particularly important to create a support structure for women of color who may have had limited opportunities in the past to shine, and who may still be one of just a few women of color in a production or in coveted positions at a company.

One way to create a support system for women is for companies to *establish affinity groups*. "Lean In Circles," for example, are "small groups of peers who meet once a month to support one another and learn new skills together — are more likely to be happy in their job, more likely to believe that they have an equal chance to grow and develop, and more likely to think their company is doing what it takes to improve gender diversity."⁶⁴ In order to maximize the usefulness of this type of an ERG for women of color, companies should *invite feedback from the group on how the company can be more inclusive and supportive*. Indeed, the "L'Oréal for Women" ERG produced a step-by-step guide for helping women advance to the senior level of the company. Among its key initiatives were a Harvard University leadership certification program and an annual retreat

outside company grounds for senior leaders that was dedicated to promoting equality and fighting bias.⁶⁵ In the past six years, L'Oréal's ERGs or "Think Tanks" have helped create a "...40 percent increase in women in leadership and an 18 percent increase in people of color across the company."⁶⁶

M. E. A. N. S. Essential Practices

- 1. *Identify a woman of color who they are willing to personally sponsor and recommend for advancement in their organization.***
- 2. *Create structured support system for women of color so they can thrive.***
- 3. *Establish affinity groups and invite feedback from the group on how the company can be more inclusive and supportive.***

Normalize Compensation

Many candidates from underrepresented groups competing for industry positions are not affluent, which means they often cannot afford the opportunity cost of accepting the low-paying internships or entry-level positions typically required for jumpstarting entertainment industry careers. This reality excludes a significant number of talented candidates. Companies must make an investment in the future by adequately compensating young talent from underrepresented groups.

Entertainment companies should *make it a practice of hiring the talent trained in diversity programs in order to remove or minimize the barriers to entry they are more likely to face*. One union representative we interviewed gave voice to the frustrations aspiring talent face when no true commitments are made to them after their diversity programs end. Another

union representative explains why some young people of color cannot afford to work for free or at a very low wage level:

“Let’s just say kids are...in college, they’re trying to get jobs. Let’s say they’re going to go work in the mailroom...at a big agency. And those aren’t high paying jobs. When you’re thinking of writers who are from underserved communities, Latinos, African Americans, that are living in [city/area name], they can’t really afford to take a job that’s paying that low. Because they’re probably more than anything contributing to their household. They’re helping their parents or whoever they live with pay rent, pay for food, and if they’re putting themselves through college and then having to get a job that pays them peanuts, they don’t have the [same] luxury as maybe Caucasian kids whose families let them live at home for free and they’re able to take that chance. [So,] I think a lot of times, [there are] opportunities that are open, but aren’t equitable to certain groups, because they just can’t afford to take them ... So, I think, for me, it’s like how can you offer opportunities to everyone that makes sense financially? If people really want to put, I would say, their money where their mouth is, take that into consideration when they have these kinds of entry-level jobs.”

Retention should also be a priority for entry-level programs. It is not enough to bring talented women and people of color into your organization; you also have to retain them. One union representative we interviewed notes that because diversity program writers are primarily seen as “free” labor, many productions opt to not bring them back to the show after the network subsidy runs out, thus stalling their careers:

“Because what happens with the diversity programs is a lot of those writers go on to become the ‘diversity hire,’ which...[usually means] they’re paid the same as any writer on a staff, but they’re being paid out of another budget. They’re not being paid out of the show budget. So in essence, they’re looked at as free ... And after that first show where they were free and they weren’t brought back on, or they didn’t move on to another show, they sort of got stuck

and they weren’t ever hired again, or they waited so long and they’re still trying to get out there. And when they’re not being hired, then their reps are dropping them. So, you see how it’s a domino effect.”

In order to combat this effect, some network programs have opted to pay for positions for more than a year so that the diversity slot writer’s value can be appreciated across a longer period. Companies are also *re-framing how they discuss the subsidized positions in order to reduce any stigma that may be associated with it*. One studio executive described how his/her company tries to minimize the stigma:

“I think we do our best here in the program to really emphasize that they’re not being hired as diversity writers. Yes, they’re being hired, because they have a diverse perspective and they have a different voice that will, hopefully, contribute to the writing team and the writers’ room and, ultimately, the show, and that is their selling point. It’s their perspective and their ability to write in a way that’s different and unique.”

Companies should also *ensure that the compensation for this talent is competitive, given the long-term value increased diversity and inclusion holds for the organization*. One talent agency representative we interviewed notes the importance of salary for leveling the playing field:

“...Less than two years ago we were paying baseline minimum wage. And we’ve made [a] several million-dollar commitment over four years to raise that entry level rate, and really get ahead of what our peers are doing, and pay competitively. Because we know that’s such a barrier for entry, and have taken a really serious commitment on that front to make sure that... people don’t have that obstacle ahead of them ... The people who can afford to work for minimum wage are the people who are living at home and are being supported by a parent or something like that.”

Paying a competitive salary makes good business sense for companies in the long run as it keeps talented employees from underrepresented groups loyal and

motivated, while also maintaining profitability by better serving the new mainstream.⁶⁷

M. E. A. N. S. Essential Practices

- 1. *Make it a practice of hiring the talent trained in diversity programs in order to remove or minimize the barriers to entry they are more likely to face.***
- 2. *Make retention a priority for entry-level programs.***
- 3. *Re-frame how the subsidized positions are discussed in order to reduce any stigma that may be associated with it.***
- 4. *Ensure that the compensation for this talent is competitive, given the long-term value increased diversity and inclusion holds for the organization.***

Structure Incentives

A host of industries outside Hollywood commonly understand that if you want to ensure certain outcomes, you must structure incentives that facilitate these outcomes into performance evaluations, contracts, and compensation practices. If Hollywood's longstanding inclusion and diversity problem is to be addressed in meaningful ways, decision makers must be personally motivated to go beyond business as usual.

One way to structure incentives is to *tie the performance evaluations and annual financial bonuses of organizational leaders to measurable achievements in diversity and inclusion goals*. One union

representative we interviewed concurred: "Companies could actually reward it, ...giving people financial benefits by saying this will up your diversity...That should be financially rewarding for the people involved in making those decisions." According to a McKinsey & Company report, Sodexo, a hospitality company, "...has publicly stated its 40 [percent] target for women in senior executive roles, has resources in place to drive the strategy in each business line, and also ties 10 [percent] of executives' bonus[es] to achieving its I&D [Inclusion & Diversity] goals."⁶⁸

Another strategy for meeting diversity and inclusion goals is to *promote competitions within and between companies to see who will have a more diverse and inclusive unit/workforce*. One studio executive we interviewed noted how his/her company sparked competition by providing company leaders with key diversity metrics:

"And then what I've done more recently is then sharing [diversity] data with leaders. ... Everybody loves competition. Especially all the A types over here, right? So, if you go in and say here is a snapshot of your workforce, the team that reports to you, and here is a snapshot of where we are overall as a company, oh. They're like I've got to get up to that."

In addition to promoting a competitive atmosphere around diversity and inclusion metrics, *top companies and senior leaders must be held accountable for achieving diversity and inclusion goals as part of their overall business goals*. In the latest report by McKinsey & Company and Lean In, the example of VMware, a software company, reveals how effective it is to provide current company demographic data, or real-time HR metrics, to VPs, so that they can easily follow the degree to which a unit is progressing or failing in terms of its diversity and inclusion goals. After implementing this system, the company met its gender representation goals within a few months, and it has continued to meet those goals over the past year.⁶⁹

An additional strategy for structuring incentives would be for diversity advocates in both the public and private sector to *use their social, financial, and/or political bargaining power to demand inclusion in productions*. For example, *breakage*, which are generally reserve funds employed by studios

and networks to satisfy deals with bankable stars, can be used as an incentive to hire talent from underrepresented groups. One union representative we interviewed noted:

“Breakage is basically a diversity budget that they can use to incentivize a show to hire that writer or director. So, a company can go to X production and say, ‘Look, if you hire this director to our program, we’ll pay for the episode out of our budget.’ So, they have that one part, which [the studio] does as well. And... they’ve used that pull to incentivize shows to hire the directors and writers. So, that’s a very useful tool.”

Similarly, production companies and well-established talent may be in a position to *demand inclusion/equity riders in their contracts with networks and studios*. This contract language basically “stipulates consideration of the deep bench of talented professionals from historically underrepresented groups and strongly encourages hiring and casting

of qualified individuals from under-represented backgrounds.”⁷⁰ Michael B. Jordan, Brie Larson, Matt Damon, Ben Affleck, and Paul Feig have all committed to adopting inclusion riders for their future projects. WME has also declared its support for inclusion riders as a means to “create change.”⁷¹

Finally, states and local municipalities should *offer tax credits to incentivize inclusive hiring practices for productions*. For example, dissatisfied by the underrepresentation of Asians on screen, the Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus led the push to institute diversity provisions in the recent extension of California’s film and television tax credit.⁷² Key provisions of the statewide legislation include the following: create a pilot program for training underrepresented Californians in below-the-line careers; provide a voluntary survey of above-the-line employees and the disclosure of programs and initiatives to increase gender and racial diversity; require transparency regarding employers’ sexual harassment policies.⁷³

M. E. A. N. S. Essential Practices:

- 1. Tie the performance evaluations and annual financial bonuses of organizational leaders to measurable achievements in diversity and inclusion goals.**
- 2. Promote competitions within and between companies to see who will have a more diverse and inclusive unit/workforce.**
- 3. Hold top companies and senior leaders accountable for achieving diversity and inclusion goals as part of their overall business goals.**
- 4. Use advocates’ social, financial, and/or political bargaining power to demand inclusion in productions (e.g., inclusion/equity riders).**
- 5. Offer state and local tax credits to incentivize inclusive hiring practices for productions.**



Conclusion

Business as usual with respect to diversity programs is clearly insufficient if the goal is to make significant headway in addressing Hollywood's longstanding diversity and inclusion problem. In order to move beyond merely tinkering around the margins of the problem, the industry must also move beyond relying primarily on lottery-like pipeline initiatives that offer only a few opportunities to all the talented candidates seeking access. Industry leaders must come to the realization that it is in their organization's best interest to invest in actual results on the diversity and inclusion front.

As we have documented in this report, new means will be required to reach this end: the business's worldview must be *modernized* to reflect our changing demographics; the net must be *expanded* in our searches for talent; the unique voices of women of color must be *amplified*; barriers to entry must

be reduced for marginalized groups by *normalizing* compensation; and incentives for decision makers to support these efforts must be *structured* into how organizations do business.

It is important to recognize that instituting diversity and inclusion policies in an organization is not a one-size-fits-all exercise. Organizations' diversity needs will likely vary, invoking differing goals and timetables with respect to racial/ethnic diversity, gender diversity, and the inclusion of employees who identify as LGBTQ+ and employees with disabilities. Leadership and employees must be sensitive to the fact that meaningful, sustained progress on the diversity front takes time and it cannot be achieved overnight. It can be a challenge to implement change and harder to maintain it. But it is a challenge worth taking on, because failure on the diversity and inclusion front means being left behind by the changing marketplace

and audience. It is never too late to start and never too soon improve.

According to the Society for Human Resource Management, “developing a diversity and inclusion initiative involves four main phases: 1) data collection and analysis to determine the need for change; 2) strategy design to match business objectives; 3) implementation of the initiative; and 4) evaluation and continuing audit of the plan.”⁷⁴ Hollywood stakeholders should implement the M.E.A.N.S. essential practices in accordance with these important, developmental phases.

In our interviews with industry leaders, actual employment was typically identified as *the* ultimate measure of success for their diversity programs. Most leaders offered specific examples of individual participants whose careers skyrocketed in order to frame their programs’ success. Several leaders mentioned at least one successful writer who was a participant of their organization’s diversity program. According to one prominent organization, 170 writers had participated in its diversity program since 2009, and 56 percent of these participants had secured work in the past three years — arguably a noteworthy success rate in such a highly competitive industry.

Despite the salience of actual employment as the ultimate measure of diversity program success, however, most existing programs continue to frame the path to success as primarily an individual pursuit. That is, though programs may provide training, networking, and platforms for exposure, the responsibility for realizing success still falls, in the final

analysis, upon the participant. It is as if there really is little at stake for the organization itself with respect to whether or not significant and measurable advances are achieved. One industry insider shared this status-quo perspective:

“I hear people who feel that the diversity programs are a disservice, but I’ve seen a lot of success stories come out of it. And when you meet the people, I could see the difference. The difference is that person put the work into it and worked their butt off, where this person just felt like, I got in, it’s easy sailing now, and they’re not putting in as much work as they should. That’s not to say that [there are] people who put in the work and then still don’t get the opportunity. That does happen. But I think what you put into it is what you’re going to get out of it.”

Current status quo approaches to addressing the entertainment industry’s diversity problem have failed to move the needle in any significant way. This fact is documented in numerous studies cited throughout this report. We must get beyond thinking of diversity programs as lottery systems that reward just a few hardworking and highly talented individuals. If the goal is truly to establish an inclusive Hollywood, one in which the storytelling that defines us as a nation better reflects the new mainstream, then the means outlined in this report must replace industry default positions and simply engaging in business as usual. If industry businesses are to remain relevant, employing the best practices outlined in this report is not just an option — it is essential.

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