



IN PURSUIT OF AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FILM INDUSTRY

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Executive Summary

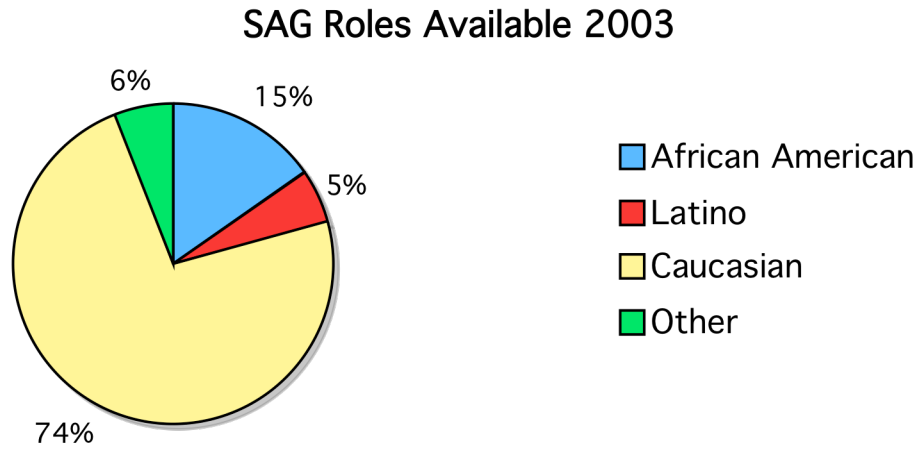
The American film and media industry is one of the most profitable and influential industries in the world. According to nationmaster.com, Americans consume on average 28 hours of television per week and have a cinema attendance of over 1,421,000,000 outings per year. With such a large viewership, the film and media industry has the potential to be the strongest and most influential mechanism of marketing and sales within the United States. However, this potential power has not been harnessed in the most beneficial way possible. The film and media industry has limited its potential impact and effectiveness in regards to sales and profitability due to its narrow racial representations.

The goal of this white paper is to discuss the television and film roles currently available to African Americans and Latinos within the American film and media industry. In order to do this, the white paper also must discuss the population breakdown of the contemporary American population, as well as the media that each listed group consumes and how many roles are currently filled by Latinos, African Americans and Caucasians respectively. Finally, in order to make a positive transformation within the perpetually evolving American society, this paper will explain why increasing the number of roles available is beneficial to the industry, as well as possible solutions to the problem of a lack of roles available to African Americans and Latinos. By addressing this deficit, and in turn finding a solution, the film and media industry is poised to increase their overall profitably.

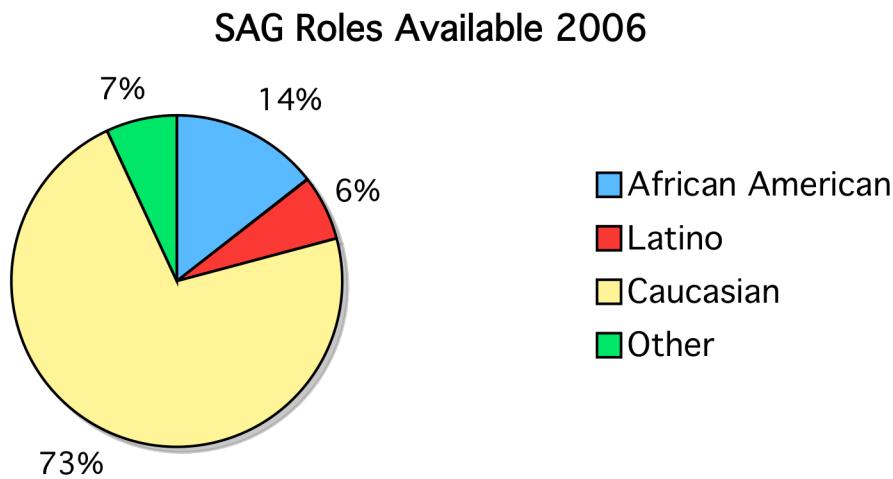
Population Breakdown

The United States Census Bureau reports that the total estimated population in the year 2007 was 298,757,310 people. Of the 298,757,310 people who were accounted for, 36,969,063 (12%) identified themselves as African American, 44,019,880 (12%) as Latino, and 221,457,175 (73%) as Caucasian. These numbers are obtained under the Bureau's goal of, as stated by Thomas Mesenbourg director of the U.S. Census Bureau, to "count everyone that resides in the U.S...to count every individual" (Ballasy). The goal of the Census Bureau can only be accomplished when all inhabitants of the United States return their census forms and thus become accounted for. Not all people currently residing the United States partake in the census for reasons such as fear of deportation if they currently reside in the United States illegally. For this reason, the number of Latinos reported could be considered a low estimate as it has a margin of error due the lack of counting all undocumented immigrants who presently reside in the United States. 76% of the 11.9 million undocumented immigrants in the United States are Latino thus it can be assumed that not all of these Latino immigrants reported to the census for fear of deportation. (Passel) Another reason to explain the margin of error is that some people identify themselves with more than one race thus counting the same person in two or more different racial categories. While these numbers may not be entirely accurate, it is still important to use this data as a general guideline in order to understand how the population breakdown relates to the general percentage minority filled roles in film and media. Understanding the population breakdown is an important component to understanding the number of roles available to African Americans and Latinos as there is a clear correlation between the percentage of the total population that associates with each race respectively and the percentage of total roles available to each minority.

TV/Theatrical Roles Available



In 2003, the Screen Actor's Guild (SAG) reported that there were 44,282 roles available for all TV/Theatrical Productions. Of these 44,282 roles, 6,783 (15%) of the roles were filled by African Americans, 2,402 (5%) were filled by Latinos, 32,560 (74%) by Caucasians. The remaining 2,537 (6%) of rolls were filled by other/unknown ethnicities.

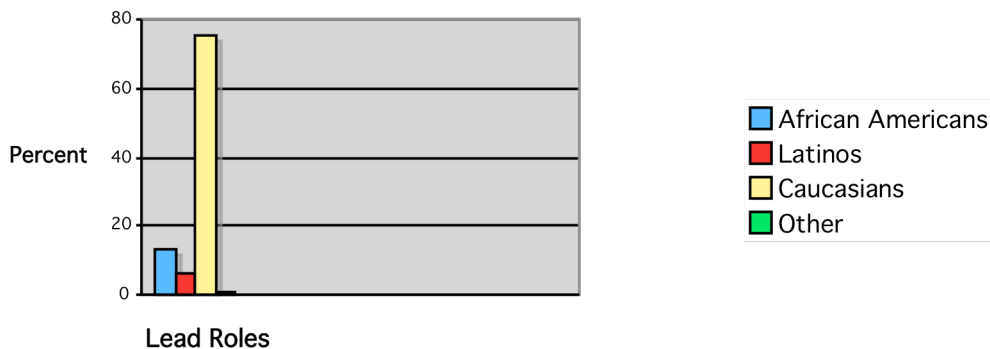
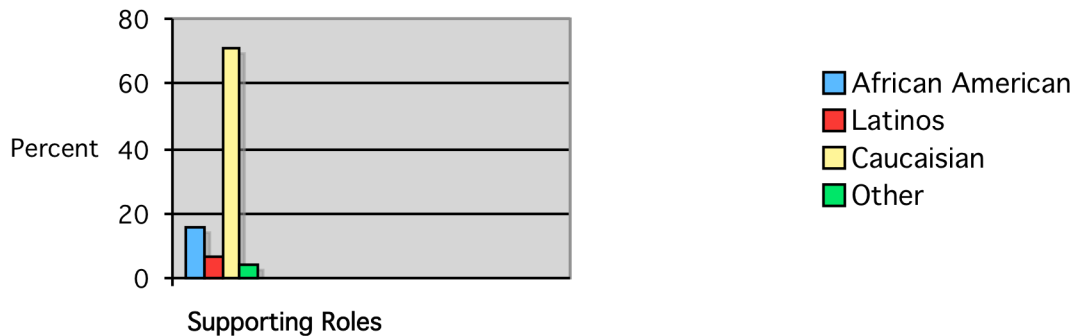


The Screen Actors Guild reported that in 2006 there were 48,542 roles available for all TV/Theatrical productions. Of those roles, 7,038 (14%) were filled by African Americans, 3,058 (6%) by Latinos, 35,095 (73%) by Caucasians and 3,349 (7%) of roles were filled by other/unknown ethnicities.

Comparison of SAG Roles from 2003 to 2006

When comparing the amount of SAG roles from 2003 to 2006, one can see that there was a slight increase in the overall roles available to the Latino minority group. However, the increase of roles filled by the Latino minority was only one percent. With a one percent increase over the course of three years, and assuming that the roles available to African Americans and other/unknown ethnicities did not increase, it would take twenty four years just for those two groups to be equal at fourteen percent! Even if this eight percent increase were to occur, minorities would still only fill around thirty five percent of the total roles available.

Types of SAG Roles Available to Minorities in 2006



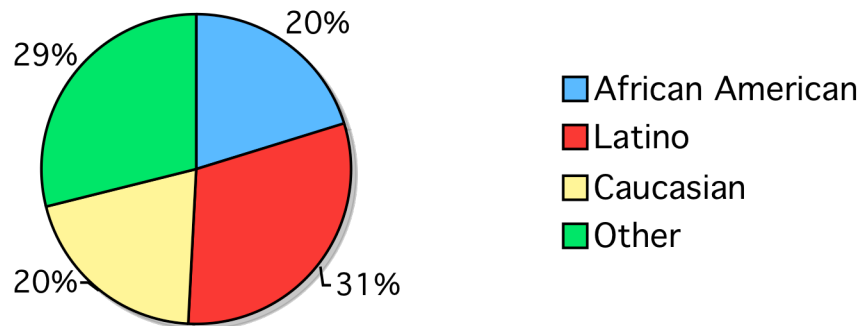
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The amount of lead roles and supporting roles available to minorities is almost equal, thus it can be deduced that one type of role is not favored over another when considering the casting of minorities. This data shows a deficit in the total number of roles, versus as specific type of role. After reviewing this data, it is fair to concluded that there needs to be an increase of total number of roles, leading and/or supporting, that are filled by minorities.

Roles Available Correlation to Population

Using the data from the United States Census Bureau for the year 2007, and the roles available to minorities according to the SAG study from 2006, one can see a correlation between the percentage of roles available to minorities and the percentage of the population that associates with each respective race. The only race that had a lower percentage of roles filled by them as would directly correlate with their percentage of the American population was the Latino minority. Latinos filled only six percent of the roles of TV/theatrical productions, yet twelve percent of the population described themselves as Latino. This leaves a deficit of six percent, and possibly more as there are many undocumented immigrants that may not be included in the population count, of SAG roles filled by Latinos when compared to population. However, African Americans filled fourteen percent of the available roles, while only twelve percent of the population identified themselves as African American. Caucasians filled exactly seventy three percent of the SAG roles available, as well as exactly seventy three percent of the American population.

Breakdown of Minority Television and Cinema Consumption Admissions per Moviegoer by Ethnicity



While all ethnic groups watch television and go to the cinema, there are different trends among television viewership and cinema attendances depending on the racial group. In 2007, according to a study by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), the average person saw 6 movies in the cinema that year, while the average moviegoer saw 8.5 films in the cinemas. Individually speaking, African Americans went to 7.8 movies in 2007, Latinos saw 10.8 films and Caucasians went to 7.9 films. This study goes on to state, “Hispanic and other moviegoers continue to see more movies per person than Caucasian moviegoers, though Caucasians still represent the majority of all moviegoers with 65%.” (*Nielsen* page 2). This majority however can be based on the fact that Caucasians simply have more percentage of the population thus there are likely more people of that ethnicity who attend the cinema.

Television viewership on the however is skewed a differently than cinema attendance. African Americans, ages 18-49, average the most ‘people using television percent’ (PUT%) daily. African Americans average 41.3 PUT% daily, while Latinos average 34.1 and Caucasians 35.8. This means that African Americans watch the most television in comparison to other ethnic groups studied; more specifically 46% more television than Caucasians. (Nielsen News) The large percent of television viewership by African Americans is unequal when

compared to the 13.2% of SAG lead roles that were filled by African Americans in 2006. (sag.org).

Reasons to Increase Minority Roles

Now that it is clear who is watching television and going to movies, one is left to wonder what the effects would be if the film and media industry increase the roles available to minorities. The short answer is an increase in profits. By increasing the presence of Latinos and African Americans in film and television, it would allow the film and media industry to significantly increase potential profits by attracting more viewers. Although an increase in profits is the largest and most tangible reason to increase roles available to minorities, there are other reasons such as Latinos and African Americans large potential buying power, untapped influence and potential societal influences.

Large Potential Buying Power

Latinos and African Americans each have a large potential buying power in the United States. The Latino population's buying power was estimated at \$798 billion in 2006 and is expected to surpass 1 trillion dollars by 2011 (*Business Exchange*). African Americans buying power in 2006 was \$799 billion and by 2011 expected to reach 1.1 trillion dollars. If these projections do come true, then African Americans, Hispanics and Asians would account for almost 61% of the combined spending power in the United States. With these minorities accounting for so much of the money being spent overall in the United States, the film and media industry has the potential to earn a larger portion of this money each year than it currently does. Caucasians make up 73% of the actors on television, yet for only 39% of the overall buying power each year.

One can see a direct correlation between the racial focus and representation of a film and the profits it makes. Examples of this are Tyler Perry's films, which are clearly and openly directed towards African Americans. Sidney Poitier, explains, in an article written by Ed Pilkinton of *the Guardian*, why Perry's film, and thus African American Cinema, are so profitable and popular. He says "[Perry] is talking to an audience that the American film industry has ignored for many, many decades. An audience that would like to see themselves reflected in their own image, that has a hunger to see themselves as they see themselves - as regular, ordinary, loving, fallible human beings." While this idea seems to be more fit for a discussion on social equality, it clearly translates into profits as Tyler Perry's films gross an average of 45 million dollars each. More specifically, his latest 2009 release *Madea Goes to Jail* grossed 87 million dollars in its first five weeks alone. Since the film only cost around 10 million dollars to shoot, it can undoubtedly be called a profitable success many times over. (Pilkinton) Tyler Perry has created a media empire based on his success, however he is not the only one succeeding in the African American Cinema market.

Since its April 29, 2009 release, *Obsessed*, starring Beyonce Knowles, has grossed over 48 million dollars domestically. For a movie that has only been released for around 12 days, it is already shaping up to a successful sleeper hit of summer. (Box Office Mojo) This is another film that has been marketed towards an African American audience, and that stars predominant African American actors. These two pieces of work have caused African American audiences to spend a large portion of their 800 billion dollar spending money at the cinema.

An increase in films marketed and related to certain minority groups could potentially increase the yearly revenue of the film and media industry since audiences are more willing to spend money films that they can relate too. Tyler Perry's films, as well as films such as

Obsessed, prove this idea to be true. One is left to wonder that if films which are blatantly directed towards minorities are so successfully, then what would the profit margin look like if minorities were equally integrated into contemporary Hollywood films? Only time and change will answer this question, however there is data that leads one to believe that the profit margin would only go up and allow the film and media industry to gross more millions currently does. (Hallman)

Untapped Influence

Latinos and African Americans are generally an untapped influence when it comes to movie ticket sales for contemporary Hollywood films that are not focused on one specific race or minority. Specified marketing films towards certain minorities could vastly increase profitability. An example of this specified marketing is the 2009 Universal release of *Fast and Furious*. *Fast and Furious* grossed over \$70 million in its opening weekend alone. An estimated 46% of the opening weekend audience was part of the Latino communities, and it had the biggest opening of 2009 in Mexico and Central America that accounted for 50% of the box office that weekend in Mexico and Brazil. However, this Latino audience did not show up at opening weekend due purely to happenstance. Adam Fogelson, president of marketing and distribution at Universal, said in an article for the *La Times*, that the budget allotted for Latino media marketing was the largest ever for a Universal film. They focused their marketing efforts by running advertisements during the World Cup qualifying match in which Mexico was pitted against the United States. Universal also tapped into Spanish-language social network sites on the internet. The final key marketing strategy that Universal implemented was to send two of the film's stars, Vin Diesel and Michelle Rodriguez, to do film promotions in major Latino markets such as Miami, Florida. (Johnson)

There are other films that have had a large opening weekend box office gross due to the Latino market such as *The Unborn* with 42% of the audience being Latino, *The Scorpion King* with 40%, and *Empire* with 51%. These films were not explicitly Hispanic themed, or Latino focused, yet due to specialized marketing, they were successful with Latino audiences. (McClintock)

Adam Fogelson makes an interesting observation as to why African American Cinema is so successful versus the success of simply more focused marketing towards Latino audiences. He says that "with an African-American movie, you can have a hit just with African-American audiences, but so far, the answer has been no with Hispanics. They have more interest in assimilating" (McClintock). This theory has proven true thus far in contemporary cinema, however it is not to say that it is a permanent condition. Whether it is making more movies focused on minorities, or simply marketing directed specifically at minorities, there is an untapped potential influence within the minority community.

Societal Influences

A secondary reason to increase the roles available to minorities is that by having a limited number of positive racial representations can lower the self-esteem of the minorities being represented. Without positive images to look up to, it does not allow minorities to have something concrete to emulate. The media is lacking a large quantity of positive examples for minority youth in American, and thus causing a lack of desire to succeed and fulfill the true potential that these minorities hold.

Another societal influence of increasing film and media roles filled by minorities is to decrease the negative connotation that people around the world have of the American film and television industry. By having a lack of minority integration, it gives the impression that

the film and media industry is not as socially evolved as some of their global counterparts. This lack of social integration can hinder how some people view America as a whole. Thus increasing the minority presence on television and in films has the potential to change America's reputation around the world.

Ways to Increase Minority Roles and Overall Consumption Specifically Tailored Marketing

Specifically tailored marketing is the easiest way in which to increase overall minority consumption and participation in the film and media industry. Simple stated, people of all races and ethnicities want to participate in things that they feel they are a part of, and the film and media industry is no exception. If film and media were to specifically tailor their marketing strategies to minority groups, these minorities would then feel more like a part of the industry and thus be more willing to take an active and participatory role.

An example of specific marketing towards Latinos included, but are not limited to, outdoor campaigns within the communities and Spanish language promotions. Such promotions could include Latino cast members, as well as other members of the cast, to attend and interact with the Latino community. An outdoor marketing campaign that includes gatherings and activities would allow the Latino audience to participate in the film's hype and allow them to do so in a community setting. This allowance would make the Latino group overall a crucial and integrated part of the American film industry.

Another marketing tool that is beneficial in marketing towards minorities, especially Latinos, is use of the Spanish language. By using Spanish language within marketing campaigns, it allows for a more participatory and relatable experience for the Latino market. Nicole Steeby says in her article "Between Authority and Authenticity: English Use in Spanish-

Language Commercials in the United States,” that “English is often stigmatized because it is associated with domination and alienation in the larger context of social relations” (*Colorado Research in Linguistics*, page 3). By removing this stigma, and in turn English, and replacing it with Spanish, it allows the Latino population to feel more included and thus more likely to spend money on film and media.

The final example of specialized marketing is to increase Internet marketing directed at Latinos. Up to 89% of the Hispanic population frequently search online. In online marketing directed towards Latinos the most important aspect, whether the advertisements are in English or Spanish, is to make sure that the visuals are authentic and relevant to their lives. This will allow for members of this community to feel included and that is the main goal in getting people to participate in the film and media industry. (Hispanicmarketadvisors.com)

Erase Negative Connotation of ‘Race Show’

Some television shows today can be classified as ‘race shows.’ These shows place a large focus on the race of characters and in many ways ostracize audience members who do not necessarily fit their intended demographic. There are many reasons that people have a negative connotation when they think of a ‘race show.’ One reason is that some people feel ostracized if they do not fit into the targeted demographic and this can lead to lower ratings. One way to reduce ostracizing any group is by having a diverse cast that does not comment on race unless absolutely pertinent to the story. This allows racially charged subject lines to become a focal and interesting story line that does not dominate entire show. Doing this would allow for important matters to be discussed yet while not hindering the characters as a whole.

The final way to lessen the connotation of a race show is by not encouraging racial stereotypes. There is no denying that stereotypes are an important and functional story telling

tool; yet with this tool comes great responsibility and should be used sparingly. Reducing the frequency in which stereotypes are used would allow for the characters to be judged based on their individual representations within the show versus the audience's preconceived notions of a certain race or lifestyle as magnified by stereotypes. Stereotypes have the potential, if used in an incorrect manner, to ostracize not only the ones being overtly stereotyped, but also the audience who disagree with the stereotypes.

Another way to make all shows more relatable to the population is by having people in general become the norm of television. The current norm is that of Caucasian middle class males, and anything, women included, are considered to be outside of the norm. By having characters of all different backgrounds and races completely integrated into the story line, it allows viewers of all lifestyles to relate and enjoy the show in its entirety.

All Members of the Media Participation

It is a well-known fact that businesses work better when all aspects are working together and the media industry is no exception if a change is to be made. The first people that need to become an active part of making a change towards increasing roles filled by minorities are the writers of both film and television. Writers need to become more varied with the roles that they write and for whom those roles are intended for. For example, instead of writing a character with a Caucasian male in mind, simply writing it for a male of any race would allow any ethnicity to potentially fill the role. In addition, writers must change their writing to focus on evolving characters within the story versus relying on preconceived notions and stereotypes. Although this may take a bit more work and creativity, it would change the way in which actors and actresses of all races are perceived.

The second member of the media that has the potential to be influential in increasing the amount of roles filled by minorities are the directors. This is simply accomplished by casting more minorities in less stereotypical minority roles. This includes more lead roles filled by minorities, but also instead of using an African American as a gangster, for example, casting an African American as a successful business man. Simple changes such as this can greatly change the perceptions of the American audiences over time.

The third media member that has the potential to change the way in which minorities are represented in the media are the actors themselves. If Caucasian, as well as African American and Latino actors were more vocal about the lack of roles available to minorities and negative minority representations, the industry would have no choice but to listen. For example, if Latinos would refused to be cast as drug dealers, then another race would have to take their place and thus help break that specific stereotype. While this may be difficult at first, if all actors took a stand, it could make a considerable difference in the film and media industry.

The only way in which something will change is if those involved, and those with the potential to make a changes, stand up for their beliefs. By standing up for these beliefs, it shows that something has to change because it will not be allowed to continue the way it currently is. This is exactly what must happen in order to increase roles available to minorities within the American film industry.

Benefits of Increasing Minority Roles

The main benefit of increasing television and film roles available to minorities is simple and can potentially increase profits substantially. Minorities will see movies and watch television shows that they can relate to and that they feel are specifically targeted

towards them. By implementing the previously described changes to the film and media industry, it allows for an increase profit margin based on the simple fact that if more people can relate to media, then more people will participate in said media.

There are other benefits to increasing minority roles besides increased profits. One benefit would be an overall improvement in the reputation of the American film and television industry on a global scale. By integrating all races into the film and media industry, it shows an equality driven philosophy that will appeal to people all over the world. This change would lead to a larger potential profit due to larger opportunities and reverence on a global change.

It would also allow for a more positive image of minorities within the United States itself. It would allow for a more positive image to shown to the youth of American and thus ideally be reflected in the culture of America.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this white paper proves that the benefits of increasing television and film roles filled by minorities apply to the film industry from a business as well as a societal standpoint. An increase in roles filled by minorities would lead to a greater profit for the film and media industry as the Latino and African American communities are a large and underutilized buying power within the United States. These two minorities hold a large and unmistakable power as it pertains to their influence in the film and media industry.

In addition to the greater profit margin, increasing roles available to minorities would shed a more positive light on the American film and media industry on both a national and global scale respectively. It would illustrate an equality that is currently missing in this industry. By making small yet definitive changes, the goal of increasing roles filled by

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minorities is attainable if all aspects of the film industry work together cohesively. Overall, increasing roles filled by Latinos and African Americans is good for both business as well as the reputation of the American film and media industry, thus it would be a beneficial change in all aspects and one that should become effective immediately.

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