

**For Immediate Release**  
Monday – December 21, 1998

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**SAG COMMISSIONED REPORT: MINORITIES AND WOMEN  
STILL UNDERREPRESENTED ON TELEVISION**

*Screen Actors Guild Addresses Efforts to Improve the Opportunities for All Performers*

**Los Angeles** -- The Screen Actors Guild today issued a commissioned report showing that prime time and daytime television significantly underrepresents large segments of the United States population, including women, Latinos, Asian-Americans, Native Americans, the disabled and the elderly.

The report, titled *Casting the American Scene*, was authored by Dr. George Gerbner, Bell Atlantic Professor of Telecommunications, Temple University. It follows two earlier studies (1979 and 1994) conducted by Gerbner on behalf of the Guild that found similar results.

The current report examined 6,882 characters who appeared in 440 prime time episodes of dramatic programs during 1994-1997. It also analyzed 2,137 characters in 205 episodes on daytime television over the same period.

Among the report's other findings:

- Despite slight progress toward more equitable representation, men still outnumber woman.
- Latinos are the most underrepresented ethnic group on television. Asian-Americans and Native Americans are also significantly underrepresented.
- Seniors of both genders are greatly underrepresented and seem to be vanishing instead of increasing as in real life.
- African-Americans are present in television in numbers generally equivalent to their percentage of the U.S. population.
- Woman age faster than men, and as they age they become more evil.
- Television characters in the nineties area healthier and wealthier than in the eighties.
- Performers with disabilities still do not play "normal" roles and these performers are seen less often on television than they were in the past.

The Guild today also released its own 1997 casting data, culled from its contracts with production companies. The figures, which look at television and film productions, closely track the findings of the report prepared by Gerbner. For instance, SAG's data shows that with one notable exception – African American men – minorities, women and seniors continue to be significantly underrepresented on U.S. television and film screens.

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## American Scene/2

The Guild's figures also show that Latinos and Asian Americans are more likely to be cast in supporting roles rather than leads.

Guild President Richard Masur said the amount of roles going to African Americans was encouraging but cautioned against reading too much into the Guild's number or the report's findings: "This report tells us a great deal about the overall number of cast members who are of a particular ethnicity or gender. It tells us very little about the type of roles being offered to minority actors or the compensation they receive for their performance."

"The Screen Actors Guild is dedicated to improving job opportunities for groups that have traditionally been underrepresented on television and in films," explained Masur. "Part of that effort is educating our industry about the differences between the fictional world created for television and film and the real world that watches those fictional creations."

Masur cited a number of programs SAG has undertaken in its effort to address the inequities in casting:

- Over the past year, the Guild issued a series of talent directories aimed at promoting performers of color and performers with disabilities. They include separate ethnic directories listing African American performers, Latino-Hispanic performers, Asian American performers, Native American Indian performers as well as a directory for performers with disabilities.
- Last summer, in an effort to encourage non-traditional casting of Native American Indian performers, the Guild distributed 400 videos to key producers and casting agents showing American Indian involvement and character portrayal (both accurate and stereotyped) in film and television.
- Next month SAG will announce the *American Scene Award*, given annually to an individual, production or series that reflects on the screen the diversity of the American scene as it exists in real life. Past winners include director John Sayles (*Lone Star*), the award winning television series *Northern Exposure* and *Star Trek*.

According to SAG's Director of Affirmative Action, Dr. Patricia Heisser Metoyer, the Guild, in conjunction with a nationally-known public policy institute, will shortly announce a major initiative aimed at highlighting the underrepresentation of Latinos in film and television.

"While we have made some strides – particularly in the employment of African American performers – today's report shows just how far we have to go before Hollywood's vision matches the actual diversity of the American scene," Heisser Metoyer added.

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