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May 30, 1995

TO: Sumi Sevilla Haru
Pamm Fair

FROM: George Gerbner

Dear Friends:

Sumi Haru kindly agreed to bring together key persons of the Media Image Coalition and perhaps a few others who may be available on Friday, June 2 at 3 pm in the SAG conference room (time and place to be confirmed). Let me explain why I requested that meeting.

You may recall that our SAG-AFTRA supported report "Women and Minorities on Television; A Study in Casting and Fate" was released at a joint conference in Washington, D.C. in June 1993. The conference was organized to enlist the support and involvement of national organizations in the unions' effort to effect greater diversity and more balanced representation of all groups of people who are now underrepresented and stigmatized. In a letter dated December 17, 1993, Rodney Mitchell informed us that the SAG Board of Directors unanimously approved the formation of a Task Force with Sumi Haru as chair to work with CEM to further pursue the formation of such a coalition. In a letter dated January 18, 1994, Bruce York expressed AFTRA support for the effort. Subsequently we also had a very useful and supportive meeting with the Media Image Coalition.

Since that time we have made major strides toward building the coalition and planning a major event that will formally launch it on the nationally and international scene. Regional meetings, broadcast interviews, newspaper stories, and lecture tours across the U.S., in Latin America, and overseas keep generating enthusiastic response. Over 3,000 persons responded by joining, requesting information, and offering to help build the movement. Over 100 organizations in all regions of the U.S., Canada, and several other countries wrote to express interest in affiliation.

On March 15-17, 1996, the Cultural Environment Movement will hold its "Founding Convention" in St. Louis. The Convention is hosted by Webster University and co-sponsored by Webster and other organizations including the Children's Division of the American Humane Association, the Minority Media and Telecommunication Council, the Center for Media Education, the Center for the Study of Commercialism, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and other national and regional organizations.

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The Convention will assemble 250 invited representatives of a broad range of organizations to draft an action program, and set up a Coordinating Council to guide the program. Most of the work of the Convention will be done in regional, national, and international work sessions and in task groups representing a wide diversity of interests including labor, media education, religion, independent producers, women's and minority groups, youth and senior citizens, and groups concerned with children, and physical and mental health and disability.

The SAG-AFTRA initiative was an early and crucial impetus sparking these developments. The time has come to re-activate our collaboration to assure the success of the Founding Convention on behalf of our shared objectives. Specifically, I would like to discuss with you and the others on Thursday three items:

1. SAG, AFTRA, and Media Image Coalition co-sponsorship of the convention. The purpose of this would be to send out the message of union collaboration with a broad range of organizations working for jobs, fairness, and diversity in media.

2. Advice and assistance on securing some key speakers for the conference including at least one or two "celebrities."

3. Joining the planning committee for the conference to assure good representation and high visibility for the needs and rights of creative people in the media.

I will try to reach Sumi today (Tuesday) to confirm our arrangement. If I do not succeed, please call me before Wednesday noon (EST) when I will be leaving for LA. I will be staying at Loews's Santa Monica Beach Hotel (310 458 6700) speaking at a conference on Thursday and leaving for some appointments in Hollywood prior to our meeting on Friday. I am leaving for San Francisco Friday evening after our meeting.

I am looking forward to seeing you soon.

