

How the Hollywood diversity problem is slowly improving

 Byleigh Andrews

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Since the #OscarsSoWhite tweet from a few years ago, there's been increased awareness of the lack of diversity, equality and inclusion in the global film and TV industry overall, but has there been any action? UCLA's just released 2019 Hollywood Diversity Report says yes, but not enough.



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[National Public Radio](#) explains that the annual Hollywood Diversity Report looks at diversity both in front of and behind the camera, as well as at the box office and ratings.

[The Root](#) sets the scene:

“ USC’s Annenberg Inclusion Initiative did some research and found some not-so-surprising results: Between 2007 to 2017, out of the nearly 50,000 characters in the 1,100 most popular films who had speaking roles, just over 70 percent of those characters were white. Conversely, only about 12% were black, while less than 7% were Asian or Latinx. When looking at gender across the decade, men were over two times more likely than women to have speaking roles than women. ”

The good news is that there is more awareness of this, and with awareness, action is being taken.

Young, diverse audiences demand fresh, diverse content

Darnell Hunt, professor of sociology and African-American studies at UCLA who co-authored the 2019 Hollywood Diversity Report, says industry attitudes toward diversity have changed since his group's first study, published in 2014:

“ When we started to study diversity... it was kind of seen as a luxury, as something that you'd get around to but it's not what's driving day-to-day business practices. Over time, as it became clear that audiences were becoming more diverse and that they were demanding diverse content, diversity itself was seen as a business imperative. Like, 'We have to figure out ways to create more diverse products because that's what today's increasingly diverse audiences are demanding.' That's a relatively new phenomenon that ... most people would not have been talking about that, you know, five, 10 years

ago. Today, everyone's talking about it. ”

[Variety](#) confirms there have been gains for women and minorities in TV, but not so much in movies. Those gains in television over the past six years are largely due to the explosion in original programming, with six Netflix titles in 2011-12 rising to 93 in 2016-17. Millennials are the ones consuming digital shows as it's their preferred platform, so diversity is a must.

Afrofuturism and Afrofeminism to the forefront

But change takes time, and luckily it's not a case of all talk, no action in taking the trend to the big screen. There are signs of a shift taking place, both on screen and behind the camera.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the impact of Marvel's *Black Panther*.



Inclusive storytelling with *Black Panther*

Charles Siboto 26 Feb 2018



Not only were the characters well-developed in this futuristic fantasy film, but it also placed the concepts of Afrofuturism, Afrofeminism, and African pride at the fore for filmmakers and film viewers alike.

Female film firebrand Ava DuVernay has also been working with LA mayor, Eric Garcetti, as well as *It* and *The Lego Movie* producer Dan Lin on the Evolve Entertainment Fund.

It's an all-encompassing diversity initiative to get more females, people of colour and those from low-income households producing movies that more accurately reflect life today.



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Here's hoping as the Hollywood lens shifts, the rest of the world follows suit.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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