

NATIONAL LATINO MEDIA COUNCIL

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Esteban Torres, National Latino Media Council

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, it's a pleasure to have you all here.

The National Latino Media Council is made up of fourteen of the largest Latino advocacy civil rights organizations in the nation. They are: the Cuban American National Foundation; League of United Latin American Citizens, also known as LULAC; Mexican American Legal Defense & Education Fund; National Association of Hispanic Publications; National Association of Latino Independent Producers; National Council of La Raza; National Hispanic Media Coalition; Nosotros; Puerto Rican Legal Defense & Education Fund; National Association of Latino Elected Officials; the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute; Mexican American Opportunity Foundation; Latino Literacy Now; and Institute for Puerto Rican Policy

This report and the grades earned by the four major networks are based on information provided by them. The report focuses on the primetime scripted programs from Fall of 2006 to Fall of 2007 and on the Reality programs on the air in the same time period. It grades the networks in eight categories, on numbers reflective of where they are as of this date. Given that we are in the eighth year of the diversity initiatives, the National Latino Media Council is setting the bar higher based on reasonable expectations that diversity performance in the eight categories should be better by this time.

Let me start by saying that there has been incremental progress at all four networks in terms of American Latinos. You will remember that last year we added a third criteria to the network commitment to the Diversity category. The three criteria are: Institutional programs and measures taken to bring Latinos into the employment ranks both in front and back of camera; out and out performance, that is, actual hiring that is concrete and measurable; and the third criterion is the clear submission of statistical data utilized to accurately grade diversity performance. Let me make one other observation; ABC and NBC have a total of 22 hours of prime-time programming per week. CBS has 18 and FOX 15. The grades received are proportional to the number of hours of prime-time programming each network had on the air during the '06-'07 period. Allow me to now go through the networks one at a time.

ABC

ABC is again the leader in diversifying its workforce both in front and back of camera. Their Actor numbers in both regular and recurring roles are sky high - not only are the numbers high, but the quality of those roles are impressive. There is a Latino in a regular role in every one of their most popular programs and, predictably, Latinos are watching ABC in larger numbers than they watch the other networks. I submit that the reason for this is that we Latinos are seeing ourselves reflected on the screen. And of course we have to mention the ABC mega-hit, "Ugly Betty." This award-winning show continues to demonstrate several Latinos in positive and empowering roles. And as you all know, "Ugly Betty," America Ferrera, won an Emmy this year for her outstanding performance.

In order to have hits like “Ugly Betty,” Latino projects must be looked at and developed, and ABC is doing an incredible job doing precisely that. I congratulate Steve McPhearson and his team for their foresight and commitment to including Latinos at all levels of their operation.

Some of you may remember that last year we were critical of the number of Directors utilized by ABC to direct 8 episodes. This year, I am pleased to report that they have increased the number of Directors by 3. However, the number of episodes did not increase – so ABC once again earns a “B” in the Directors category. We appreciate the fact that by increasing the number of Latino Directors there is a larger pool of Directors that can work at ABC and the rest of the networks. However, it is very important that the number of episodes directed by Latinos also increase. As a consequence, we were compelled to give ABC the same grade.

In the Procurement category, ABC continues to be the leader in awarding contracts to Latino entrepreneurs, both in terms of Latino entrepreneurs and actual spend.

What is very significant for us is that ABC continues its attempt to bring to the screen American Latino themed programming as well as increasing deals with Latino producers and attaching Latino actors to new projects that don’t necessarily have a Latino theme to them. This is exactly what you do if you’re going to increase employment numbers and diverse programming. We thank ABC for their forward thinking and their openness in providing all relevant data to judge their diversity performance.

NBC

NBC is to be congratulated on two specific categories. In Reality programming they increased their Reality program regulars by a whopping 800%! No other network has numbers that even come close to this percentage. And in the Writers and Producers category, NBC doubled their previous number in this important area. As you all know, the writers of today are the show creators of tomorrow, so this particular category has significant meaning for all of us.

We congratulate NBC for these improvements and also point out that they are the leaders in the Directors category, both in the number of Directors they hired for their shows and the number of episodes that these American Latinos directed. We are very pleased with these numbers and their “A” grade in this category reflects that accolade.

CBS

Under the leadership of Nina Tassler, President of CBS Entertainment, CBS continues to improve their diversity performance. Their overall grade of “B+” did not change from last year, but with the addition of “Cane,” and a couple of other Latino themed programs that are under development, which are not included in this report card, we anticipate that CBS’ diversity performance numbers will be extremely good next year and possibly make them the new diversity performance leader.

CBS has the largest number of American Latino creative executives of all four networks. We believe that the important inclusion of these Latino creative executives has resulted in the addition of “Cane,” and the other Latino-themed programs that are currently under development. We are convinced that when Latino executives are part of a network, Latino projects have a more sympathetic ear, as wonderfully demonstrated by CBS this past year.

In the Actors category, CBS receives a “B+” for raising the number of “regular” actors by 50% even though they dropped their number of “recurring” actors. In Program Development, which is very important to us, CBS receives an “A” for having Latino themed programs in the pipeline and attaching Latino talent to their non-Latino themed programs.

In Procurement, CBS improved their grade from a “C” to a “B,” thanks to their VP of Diversity, who has made this category a priority for the network. You will remember that before last year, CBS received “F’s” from us for their unwillingness to provide those procurement numbers. We congratulate them for their new frame of mind and for the speed with which they are increasing their procurement total spend as well as their pool of American Latino entrepreneurs.

FOX

Now we come to FOX, please keep in mind that FOX only has 15 hours of primetime programming per week, and therefore their individual category grades reflect this reality. We are pleased to report that FOX doubled its number of American Latino actors in the “regular” category and increased the number of writers and producers by an impressive 57.1%, which is impressive and significant.

If we have a criticism of FOX, it is their internal policy that prohibits us from receiving complete disclosure on statistical information that is readily provided by the other networks. We lament this fact and continue to press for FOX to be more open and forthright. It is very difficult to accurately judge a network's diversity performance when specific names of talent and executives are not provided. Despite this challenge, we were able to piece together the information they did provide and give them a “B-” for their overall diversity performance.

SUMMARY

The number of American Latinos both in front and back of camera has increased, but they are incremental numbers in proportion to our population. The diversity programs that were begun six and seven years ago are now bearing fruit and it is not unreasonable to expect that the present numbers will continue to climb and that there will be no backsliding. I also want to emphasize that diversity programs are fine, but we grade on performance, not simply on good intentions.

Finally, I would now like to take this opportunity to address a very painful subject that is related to diversity performance. As you all know, Latinos – documented or undocumented – are being unfairly attacked by Right-Wing disc-jockeys and television personalities. Hate crimes against Latinos are at an all-time high and rising as a consequence of this hate speech that continues to permeate the American airwaves. The Anti-Defamation League just published another report on

October 23rd that documents not only the hate speech engaged in by Right-Wing talk show hosts, but also the acceptance this kind of diatribes are having on the American public.

Because of the significant lack of positive media images of Latinos in the U.S., and because we do not have sufficient access to the airwaves, our community is at great risk. If this hate speech is allowed to continue, it will continue to be a tremendous disservice to Latinos and non-Latinos across the country, who hear this anti-Latino speech and assume the information presented is correct.

Ladies and gentlemen, we simply need more Latinos on television - not only on the News and Public Affairs programs, but also in the Entertainment sphere. All Americans across this nation need to understand that we have the same aspirations and preoccupations as everyone else - we want to provide for our families, we want to keep them safe, and we want what every other American in this great nation of ours enjoys. I thank you very much for your presence this morning and your continued interest in this very important endeavor.

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2007 National Latino Media Council "Report Card" on Television Diversity

	ABC	NBC	FOX	CBS
Actors: On-air Primetime <i>Scripted</i> Shows	A	B	B	B+
Actors: On-air Primetime <i>Reality</i> Shows	B	A	B	B
Writers and Producers: Primetime	A	B	B+	C+
Directors: Primetime	B	A	C	C+
Program Development	A	B	C+	A
Procurement	A	B	C	B
Entertainment Creative Executives	C	C	C	A
Network Commitment to Diversity Initiatives and submission of Statistical Data	A	A	B	A
OVERALL GRADE FOR 2007	A-	B	B-	B+