

# **STUDY: WHITES GET MAJORITY OF ACTING JOBS**

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**Study: Whites get majority of acting jobs**

**Minorities left out of 80% of casting**

[BY GREG HERNANDEZ, Staff Writer](#)

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Ethnic minorities were not cast in about 80 percent of first-, second- and third-billed leading roles in Hollywood films last year, according to a study released Wednesday.

This level of representation of Latino, black, Asian-American and American Indian actors is based on a review of the 171 commercially released films in 2005 that reported a gross of at least \$1 million.

In addition, the first-time study from the UCLA School of Law and the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center showed that 69 percent of all casting notices for three months this summer specifically asked for white actors. Roles advertised for a specific ethnicity other than whites ranged from 0.5 percent to 8 percent of the total, it found.

Also during that three-month period, white actors could compete with minorities for an additional 8.5 percent of total parts - beyond the nearly 70 percent that specifically sought white actors.

"We're not surprised. It reflects the hiring patterns we've seen over the years," said Pamm Fair, deputy national executive director of the Screen Actors Guild. "The (guild) continues to be committed to more positive roles for performers of color."

Study author Russell Robinson, UCLA acting professor of law, believes that depending on the facts of an individual case, lawsuits can be filed under federal law that prohibit employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin.

"Casting directors take into account race and sex in a way that would be blatantly illegal in any other industry," Robinson said.

His findings were not surprising to the National Hispanic Media Coalition, which releases its annual report card on diversity in television casting next week.

"All you have to do is go to the movies and look at who's on the screen and look through the titles," observed Alex Nogales, president and CEO of the group. "Latinos are great for

staying behind at the titles to see if we can identify any Latinos. When we get to the bus captains and the busboys, then we get into the Latinos."

Nogales said Latinos have proved to be loyal moviegoers and should see themselves better-represented on-screen.

"We need to meet with the studios and their lobbyists and be very public about it," he said. "They won't do anything unless they're forced to."

Jane Jenkins, a casting director on such films as "The Da Vinci Code," "Friday Night Lights," "Apollo 13" and "When Harry Met Sally" said an "enlightened" casting director will work to diversify a cast in parts that are not specified as being a specific ethnic type or gender.

"As a casting director, you are directed to cast by the nature of what is written," Jenkins said. "I do believe the majority of the casting directors I know try to open up to as much a variety of the film population as possible. But it is so dictated by what is written."

She cites recent films "Babel" and "Half Nelson" as two examples of ethnically diverse casts.

Robinson surveyed casting announcements, or "breakdowns," from Breakdown Services, a communication network and casting system for the period June 1 through Aug. 31.

He challenges the legality of race-specific casting announcements and believes that in many instances, taking race and sex into account for acting roles violates Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination.

Robinson said there are many exceptions that permit the government to regulate certain speech in certain ways.

"I argue that Title VII's regulation of casting announcements falls into an exception," he said, adding that he didn't believe that complying with Title VII would entail using quotas but rather would require the consideration of actors of color and women for many more roles.

He recommends banning the use of race/sex classification in casting breakdowns except where casting an actor of a specific race or sex is truly integral to the narrative.

The entire study, based on a longer article that will be published in January in the University of California at Berkeley's California Law Review, can be found at [www.chicano.ucla.edu/press/briefs/current.asp](http://www.chicano.ucla.edu/press/briefs/current.asp). [greg.hernandez@dailynews.com](mailto:greg.hernandez@dailynews.com)

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