

# NLMC

National Latino Media Council

## 2011 NLMC Network Diversity Narrative

Two years ago the National Latino Media Council (NLMC) celebrated the 10th anniversary of the signing of the historic Memoranda of Understanding between the Multi-Ethnic Media Coalition<sup>1</sup> and the top television broadcast networks: ABC, NBC, CBS and FOX. This is the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Diversity Report Cards. This ten year partnership has produced tangible and incremental results, but we seem to have reached a plateau.

The networks want to reach the burgeoning Latino audience, but they have yet to understand just how to do so. According to the 2010 Census, Latinos are 16% of the U.S. population, representing \$1 trillion in purchasing power annually. During the 2009-2010 television season, the Nielsen Company identified 12.9 million U.S. Latino TV households; approximately 65% of these households watch English media. As the Latino population continues to grow, the networks' diversity performance remains inadequate. In the next decade, NLMC will identify and encourage the systematic change needed to weave more Latinos into the networks' fabric.

The network executives understand that Latinos represent a considerable audience, yet they struggle to create shows with which Latinos can connect. NLMC grades the networks on creative executives because it is essential that Latinos be part of the decision-making teams that green light programs. Without more Latinos creative executives, writers, producers and directors, television shows are less likely to succeed in attracting the Latino audience.

There is much work to be done in the area of adding diversity to the ranks of working writers in Hollywood. The Writers Guild of America, West Executive Summary of its *2011 Hollywood Writers Report* states that a total of 10% of television writers are people of color. Minorities, the report states, have been regularly underrepresented by factors of about 3 to 1 among television writers. The WGAW report continues to state "it appears that minority writers are at best

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<sup>1</sup> The Multi-Ethnic Media Coalition is comprised of NLMC, NAACP, National Asian/Pacific American Media Coalition, and American Indians in Film and Television. NLMC is an umbrella organization made up of sixteen of the largest Latino advocacy civil rights organizations in the U.S., including the Cuban American National Foundation, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), National Association of Hispanic Publications, National Association of Latino Independent Producers (NALIP), National Council of La Raza, National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC), Nosotros, Latino Justice, National Association of Latino Elected Officials, Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, Mexican American Opportunity Fund, Latino Literacy Now, National Institute for Latino Policy, MANA, and Arizona State University Center for Community Development and Civil Rights. NHMC serves as Secretariat of NLMC.

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treading water when it comes to their share of television employment, particularly as the nation itself becomes more diverse.”

NLMC understands that without Latino writers, accurate and multi-dimensional Latino stories will be left untold. Including Latinos inside of the writers’ rooms is not enough -they must be empowered to speak freely. Junior writers may not have the clout to debate a negative stereotype or a bad Latino joke. To their detriment, entertainment executives have been missing the point, that in order to connect with an audience one must understand that audience. Due to the lack of diversity inside of the networks’ teams at all levels, a successful formula has yet to be developed that results in hits shows that connect with Latinos. Just to give a few examples of what a winning formula looks like: Silvio Horta was the head writer and executive producer of the hugely successful serious “Ugly Betty,” and George Lopez didn’t have many Latino writers on his show but he was an Executive Producer.

This narrative summarizes the progress and the shortfalls of the networks’ diversity efforts during the 2010-2011 television season. Networks are evaluated on overall diversity performance based on their employment of Latino actors in primetime scripted and reality programming, Latino writers, producers and directors in primetime programming, and Latino entertainment executives. NLMC also evaluates program development, procurement and commitment to diversity and transparency. Evaluations are based on data that the networks provide NLMC pursuant to the Memoranda of Understanding, and weighted according to the number of weekly primetime programming hours per network.

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ABC

ABC has consistently turned Latino actors into stars of hit shows. “Desperate Housewives” transformed Eva Longoria into a household name and “Modern Family” did the same for Sofia Vergara. Ian Gomez, Sara Ramirez, and Rico Rodriguez continue to have regular supporting roles on hit shows “Cougar Town,” “Grey’s Anatomy,” and “Modern Family.” The ABC network has successfully created hit Latino-themed shows that have become pop culture classics. It was ABC that gave us the positive and memorable role model “Ugly Betty,” and the hit family comedy “George Lopez.” We look forward to ABC developing more substantive roles for Latinos.

On reality shows, ABC has improved in featuring Latinos in front of the camera. Last season, “Dancing With the Stars” featured Christina Aguilera, Selena Gomez, Carlos Santana and Pitbull. This year, although not factored into this report card, “Dancing With the Stars” catapulted J.R. Martinez to fame. Martinez started his television career on ABC’s daytime soap “All My Children.” ABC executives recognized J.R.’s public appeal and decided to have him participate on “Dancing With the Stars,” which paid off brilliantly for the network.

ABC employed the same number of regular actors as last year and improved its number of recurring scripted actors; however, the network is still below its 2009 numbers. The number of Latinos on reality shows increased significantly this year. “Dancing With The Stars” and “Supernanny” are two main reasons for the high number of Latinos on ABC’s reality shows.

While ABC continues to show consistent commitment to hiring Latino writers on its shows, the number of producers has dropped drastically. NLMC greatly values Latino writers because it is these writers that are able to tell authentic and multidimensional Latino stories while shying away from negative stereotypes. We are pleased that ABC continues to partner with NLMC in its Writer’s Program to train diverse writers and introduce them to network executives. We believe that this has been a mutually beneficial partnership, as ABC has staffed six NLMC program graduates over the years, including – most recently – Silvia Olivas on Disney Channel’s “Jesse,” Gina Monreal on ABC’s “Brothers and Sisters,” and Sierra Ornelas on ABC’s “Happy Endings.” NLMC is hopeful that ABC will employ more producers next year.

For the past couple of years NLMC has criticized ABC for its declining number of directors, but this year we are pleased to report that the network is back on track. Talent Development & Diversity programs illustrate ABC’s historic commitment to developing a behind-the-camera pipeline for diverse candidates. The ABC DGA Directing Program, one of the longest running programs of its kind in the entertainment industry, gives participants such as Javier Chapa, Zetna

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Fuentes, and actor Tony Plana the opportunity to shadow veteran episodic directors and develop relationships with network and studio executives.

In development, ABC has several actors on board in the new season, including Lana Parrilla in “Once Upon A Time,” Madeline Stowe in “Revenge,” and Hector Elizondo in “Last Man Standing.”

Although spending with Latino-owned firms increased this year as compared to last year, the network needs to move from cursory efforts to proactive efforts that reach out to new Latino small business partners. It’s a challenging time for small business and it’s the best time for the network to increase its outreach efforts.

ABC has committed to improve its hiring of Latino entertainment executives but for a couple of years now the network has had no Latino in this important category. The network does have Latinos in top level positions such as Marla Provencio, Executive Vice President of Marketing for ABC Entertainment Group; and Bob Mendez, Senior Vice President of Diversity; nevertheless it is essential that Latinos be in positions where they can be part of the decision-making team that green light projects.

Two other categories worth mentioning are daytime shows and news. Daytime soaps have been the breakthroughs for stars such as Eva Longoria, Mark Consuelos, Lorenzo Lamas, and Alana de la Garza. ABC has consistently provided opportunities for Latinos on daytime shows. Currently Latinos on ABC daytime soaps include Maurice Bernard, J.R. Martinez, Jordi Vilasuso and Vanessa Marcil. On the news side, ABC continues to be the home of newsmagazine anchor John Quinones, 20/20 anchor Elizabeth Vargas, and award-winning journalist Jim Avila.

This network has been the leader in its diversity efforts for years. The Disney/ABC Writing Program has been lauded as one of the most successful writers programs in the industry. It is the only program of its kind sanctioned by the Writers Guild of America, West (WGAW.) 2011 Writing Fellows include NLMC alumna Silvia Cardenas Olivas, Gabriel Fonseca and Jessica Ramos.

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NBC

For the past few years NBC has been the home of popular Latino actors in supporting roles including funny lady Aubrey Plaza on “Parks and Recreation,” NHMC Impact Award-winning actor, Oscar Nunez on “The Office,” and Josh Gomez on “Chuck.” NLMC applauds NBC for these roles that defy predictable stereotypes and it is hopeful that the network will soon find starring roles for Latinos on its shows. Although the quality of the Latino scripted roles are strong, the number of Latinos in scripted roles at NBC continues to be low. On the other hand, in reality shows NBC does the best job of any network in the number of Latinos in front of the camera. For this report card period 2010-11, Latinos on NBC reality shows include: Christina Aguilera on “The Voice,” renowned Latina chef, Lorena Garcia on “America’s Next Great Restaurant” and “The Biggest Loser,” Los Angeles’ Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa on “School Pride,” and Juan Betancourt, Cesar Millan and Catherine Roman on “The Celebrity Apprentice.”

NBC improved in the number of producers but not the number of writers. In the past, NBC has identified promising behind-the-camera Latino talent and has primed them for success. Danielle Sanchez-Witzel is an NBC success story. A graduate of NBC’s diversity writing program, Sanchez-Witzel has achieved success as an Executive Producer at this network. Norberto Barba has also thrived as an Executive Producer at NBC, most recently with the new fantasy drama, “Grimm.” The network continues to partner with NLMC in its Writer’s Program but NBC executives haven’t figured out how to tap into the pool of talented writers it has invested in creating. We encourage NBC to reconnect with the alumni from NLMC’s writers program and increase its number of Latino writers at the network.

NBC slightly improved its number of directors for the 2010-11 season.

In the program development category, NBC has exciting prospects working with well-known Latino talent in front and behind the camera. NLMC is hopeful that these projects move forward and provide an opportunity to produce programming that not only is produced by Latinos but will bring a high numbers of Latino viewership. .

NBC has increased its spending with Latino-owned business by 37% and added fifty new suppliers. It also hosted its 1<sup>st</sup> Hispanic Supplier Diversity Council and now has a West Coast Diversity Supplier Manager.

Once again, NLMC congratulates NBC for its performance in the past few years of hiring and promoting Latino entertainment executives. Entertainment Executives are the decision makers that can make a difference in the degree that diversity is embraced at a network. For example, it

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was Enrique Guillen the Vice President of Alternative Programming that recruited the comedian, Felipe Esparza that ended up winning the seventh season of the "Last Comic Standing."

Finally, NLMC is pleased that NBC's family of networks continues to promote Latinos in front and behind the camera.

- On USA, Gina Torres is a regular on USA's "Suits," and Alfredo Barrios is the Executive Producer at "Burn Notice."
- On SyFy Erika Kennair is the Vice President of Original Programming and Development, and as a Latina she has her hand on the pulse of what Latinos look for in science fiction shows. Jack Kenny is the show-runner for the popular fantasy "Warehouse 13."
- Wilson Payamps is a stylist and designer, originally from the Dominican Republic, appearing on "Fashion Hunters."
- Oxygen's "The Glee Project" highlighted several Latinos including Mattheus Fernandes, Samuel Larsen and Emily Vasquez.

In the 2010 report cards NLMC noted that casting diversity was an area with much opportunity for improvement. NLMC is pleased to report that NBC turned this recommendation into action and created a new, highly-competitive NBC Casting Apprentice Program as a career development opportunity for those individuals pursuing a career in casting. This is a rotational program designed for individuals with diverse backgrounds who aspire to join a casting office. Apprentices are given the opportunity to work in both a network and freelance casting office. We applaud NBC for its new efforts in diversifying casting, an industry seriously lacking the participation of people of color.

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## CBS

CBS continues to struggle to find roles for Latinos as regulars on the network's shows. On the other hand the network has the highest number of Latinos in recurring roles. NLMC values regular acting roles because it is with these roles that deeper, multidimensional stories can be told. The "CSI" franchise does a good job of promoting positive role models. On "CSI: Miami," Eva La Rue plays Natalia Boa Vista, a DNA specialist; on the same show Adam Rodriguez plays Eric Delko, the fingerprint, tire and drug identification expert of the Miami-Dade Crime Lab, as well as an underwater recovery expert. On "NCIS" Cote de Pablo is Ziva David, a former Mossad agent now probationary agent, and new U.S. citizen. "The Good Wife" is a CBS show that has had many Latino recurring actors including, an NLMC favorite, America Ferrera, who portrays a graduate student. These roles are rich and promising and we applaud CBS for supporting them. CBS is encouraged to bring in more Latinos in regular scripted roles.

CBS greatly improved its number of Latino reality actors, especially on "Live to Dance" and "Undercover Boss." In the past, NLMC identified the participation of Latinos in on-air reality shows as a challenge for the network. NLMC congratulates the network for its improvement in the on-air reality talent category.

CBS is performing worse than the other networks in the producers/writers category. Although CBS slightly increased its number of Latino producers from last year, it lost a couple of Latino writers. CBS can do better, and has realistic opportunities to do so, with new hit shows such as "¡Rob!," which features a predominately Latino cast. In order to depict these Latino characters fairly and accurately CBS should prioritize the hiring of Latino writers.

CBS' Diversity Institute Director Initiative is working. Although CBS is still below its 2009 director numbers, NLMC congratulates the network for having the best participation of Latino directors as compared to the rest of the networks, both in number of directors and number of episodes.

CBS usually does well with program development, however, there seems to be a glitch in bringing ideas into production and NLMC hopes that CBS figures out how to translate great program ideas to hit shows with staying power.

CBS has shown great improvement in procurement. Overall the network is in third place for spending with Latino firms. Nevertheless NLMC applauds the internal systems that CBS has created to improve its performance in this category. Annual Supplier Diversity scorecard reviews are conducted with the business units at the CEO level to measure progress toward annual goals. CBS has increased minority contracting in the last three years, while benefiting

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from cost savings through their Supplier Diversity program. Tom Hogan, Senior Vice President, Strategic Sourcing, says that based on an improved Supplier Diversity program, CBS Corporation has been able to drive significant savings percent, while also driving its share of spend with diverse suppliers.

NLMC also congratulates CBS on its Latino entertainment executives. Three Latinas are in creative executive positions. Most notably, Nina Tessler is President of CBS Entertainment. In addition, Christina Davis was promoted to Executive Vice President of Drama Development, and Edith Mendoza is Vice President of Comedy Development.

CBS continues its popular Actors Workshop and Launches Actors Career Day. These workshops are designed to give actors the insight into the casting process that will help them land jobs. The workshops are conducted throughout the year and around the country and are led by CBS Casting VP, Fern Orenstein. Another program that NLMC is very excited about is the Unprecedented Daytime Diversity Initiative. In 2010 CBS unveiled a completely new approach to creating opportunities for actors of color in daytime dramas. CBS Casting collaborates with CBS Daytime to create a new path for actors of color to come before casting directors for the highly-rated CBS dramas. This is a creative and effective way to develop a pipeline of talent for prime time.

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## FOX

Overall FOX performed poorly in its diversity efforts. For years, NLMC has highlighted Fox's lack of transparency in providing clear and complete information to evaluate diversity performance. This year was no different - FOX did not supply the data that all other networks provide. We are hopeful that the new diversity team will be able to improve in this arena.

NLMC recognizes that FOX has less programming hours than the rest of the networks and its evaluation is weighted accordingly. Nevertheless there is much work needed at this network in regards to increasing the number of Latino scripted actors in regular and recurring roles, and NLMC has been stating this fact for a few years. There are not many Latino regular roles to write about at FOX. One notable exception is Naya Rivera on Fox's smash hit "Glee," who portrays Santana Lopez. Rivera, now a regular on the show, portrays a gay Latina - a complex and non-traditional character. FOX is encouraged to evaluate the internal issues that prevent the network from improving in this category. In reality shows Fox had been the leader in casting and promoting Latinos but now the other three networks have caught up leaving FOX well behind. FOX is now the network with the fewest Latinos on unscripted shows.

The writers and producer numbers have decreased as well and because the network hesitates to provide the names of the producers and writers it is difficult to verify the information. FOX seems to thrive in its hiring of directors, but again because FOX does not provide the directors' names NLMC was not able to verify the information.

The new season includes four new series with five Latino regulars on scripted shows. We were not informed of any new deals in development

This year Fox offered no information on procurement performance, an indication, most likely, of low performance in this category.

NLMC congratulates Fox for having three Latino entertainment executives.

However, NLMC continues to be frustrated with Fox's lack of transparency and its failure to clearly and comprehensively explain the data it provides. NLMC hopes that this issue will be resolved soon.