

BUSINESS

Ethnic groups condemn television networks

LOS ANGELES (AP) - A coalition of ethnic groups condemned the major television networks on Thursday for failing to achieve diversity in programming and said a boycott or other measures may be needed.

"The time for talking is fast coming to an end," attorney Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. told a news conference by phone.

More than a year ago, the coalition secured agreements from the four major networks to increase both the number of minorities on-screen as well as development deals with writers and producers.

The coalition released a "report card" Thursday grading the networks' efforts. The lowest overall mark was a D-minus for ABC.

"It seems ABC has actually gone in the wrong direc-

tion," said Esteban Torres, chairman of the coalition that's been pressing to improve the TV picture.

Other overall grades: D-plus for CBS, C-minus for Fox and C for NBC. In the coalition's first report card last November, the networks received mostly Ds.

Network executives didn't attend the news conference at the offices of the American Federation of Television & Radio Artists.

Afterward, CBS said its on-air representation of minorities in leading or recurring roles has nearly doubled between 1999 and 2001. Josie Thomas, the network's senior vice president for diversity, said CBS prime-time dramas, comedies, news and reality programming this fall is slated to include 53 minorities compared to 29 in the fall of 1999.

"Clearly, there is much work to be done to better reflect our nation's many cultures, particularly that of Latinos," Thomas said. "But in the 18 months since we began our dialogue with the coalition, our commitment to diversity is both quantifiable and significant."

ABC spokeswoman Zenia Mucha said her network is increasing ethnic representation in prime time by 39 percent and in its overall schedule by 18 percent next season, with changes planned in new series that will further boost diversity.

"We are disappointed that the coalition has misrepresented ABC's record," she said.

"ABC has ethnically diverse lead characters that are portrayed as positive role models, which we consider critical toward promoting true

diversity," Mucha added, pointing to such examples as "NYPD Blue's" new Hispanic police lieutenant (played by Esai Morales).

The coalition includes groups representing blacks, Hispanics, Asian-Americans and American Indians. In compiling the report, it examined shows that aired during the past season and series planned for fall.

"It's even worse than any of us thought," said Alex Nogales, president of the National Hispanic Media Coalition.

Each network also received grades in specific areas from individual groups.

The American Indians in Film & Television gave ABC an F for its effort to include that ethnic group in programming. CBS was lauded for an upcoming series, "Wolf Lake," which features Ameri-

can Indian actor Graham Greene, but still received only a D-plus from the Indian group.

The NAACP, which is part of the coalition, and other members said they will consider stronger steps to prod the networks to make progress.

"A boycott? A legal action? Maybe both?" said Torres, adding: "We are going to talk tactics."

An announcement could be made during the NAACP's national convention in July, he said.

While releasing its first report last November, the coalition said major broadcast networks had included more blacks in their shows but otherwise failed to live up to agreements to provide more ethnically diverse programming.

The networks first opened

negotiations with civil rights groups after the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People floated the threat of a TV boycott or legal action because of the lack of minority actors on the fall 1999 schedule of new shows.

According to a survey released earlier this month by the advocacy group Children Now, the number of black characters in network series increased from the 1999-2000 TV season to the 2000-01 from 13 percent to 17 percent; Hispanics dropped from 3 percent to 2 percent; Asian-American characters increased from 2 percent to 3 percent.

By comparison, blacks and Hispanics each make up about 12 percent of the U.S. population and Asian-Americans 9 percent, according to 2000 census figures.

West Coast Publishers group set to meet in Las Vegas

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The West Coast Black Publishers Association's upcoming 18th annual conference is slated for Las Vegas.

The conference, set for October 10-13th at the Monte Carlo Resort, will feature four days of workshops, forums, and seminars on topics concerning African Americans.

The theme is "The Legacy of the Black Press: Challenging the Status Quo."

"Everyone involved is looking forward to the conference," said association president Cloves Campbell, Jr.

"Our newspapers are a vital part of the community and we are proud of our commitment to tell the stories that affect our lives."

Founded in 1971, the black publishers association has devoted itself to advancing the profile of the black press in the western United States

as serving as a networking tool for black publishers. Publishers from Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington are planning to attend.

Business, political and entrepreneurial leaders are invited to attend or participate as speakers and panelists.

On Thursday, Oct. 11, which has been designated as Youth Day, 400 high school students are invited to participate in a special youth

conference.

"We eagerly accept the responsibility of reaching out to help our young people,"

Campbell said. "Our conference provides a unique opportunity for qualified high school students to interact

with outstanding role models of corporate America."

Those interested can call 818-995-6545

Leaving instructions for your heirs

By Jesse B. Brown
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Typical estate planning documents such as wills and trust agreements allow you to control the distribution of your assets. My mother was clear; was yours?

Many people including African-Americans fail to understand that these are legal documents.

But since they are legal documents, you don't have an opportunity to explain your wishes and preferences.

Preparing a Letter of Instruction to your heirs can fill that role.

This is an informal document that gives your heirs important information about financial and personal matters and allows you to clarify requests you have made in other legal documents.

You should consider including information about the following items in a Letter of Instruction: death and other

This is an informal document that gives your heirs important information about financial and personal matters and allows you to clarify requests you have made in other legal documents.

benefits; special wishes; a list of who is to receive personal effects; location of personal documents; location of safe-deposit boxes; income tax returns; outstanding loans; social security number; life insurance policies; other insurance; investments; a listing of household contents; automobiles; important warranties and receipts; doctors' names; checking accounts; credit cards; details about your home, choice of cemetery and funeral preference.

If you have made unequal bequests to your children or other heirs, this is a good place to explain your rationale.

The letter will help your

heirs ensure that they have identified all of your assets and benefits and will avoid speculation regarding your wishes. Not only will the letter benefit your heirs, it is also a good way to organize your records and ensure that all important documents can be easily located.

The information is likely to change, so you should review the letter at least annually, making necessary changes.

If you'd like help with this Letter of Instruction, please email.

Jesse B. Brown is president of Krystal Investment Management, a financial advisory firm in Chicago.



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