
NATIONAL LATINO MEDIA COUNCIL

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2010 NLMC Network Diversity Report Card Narrative

The National Latino Media Council (NLMC) regrets that this annual diversity report card reflects a decline in Latino diversity at the four major television networks – ABC, NBC, CBS and Fox. Last year we celebrated the tenth anniversary of a national movement to change the face of television: the historic signing of Memoranda of Understanding between the Multi-Ethnic Media Coalition¹ and the four networks. At that time we lauded the networks for incremental progress in diversifying their workforces in front and behind the camera. This year the networks, while more representative of our multicultural nation than they were a decade ago, are in need of reaffirming their commitments to including Latinos in creative positions and procurement opportunities. All but one of these networks – CBS – received either “Ds” or “Fs” in at least one of eight categories of evaluation.

This report card summarizes progress and shortfalls of the networks’ diversity efforts during the 2009-2010 television season. Networks earn overall diversity performance grades, as well as specific grades 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. Specific grades are also assigned for program development, procurement and network commitment to diversity and transparency. Grades are based on information that the networks provide NLMC pursuant to the Memoranda of Understanding. Grades are weighted according to the number of weekly primetime programming hours per network.

¹ 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, 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.

ABC

For years ABC has been a model network and in many respects, its commitment to diversity is healthy. However, this year ABC earned an overall grade of “B-” because it has slipped in several key areas, to include recurring and reality actors, directors and entertainment executives.

In the 2009-2010 season ABC brought us new hit shows such as “Modern Family,” starring Sofia Vergara and Rico Rodriguez, and “Cougar Town,” with Ian Gomez. These programs are funny and have heart, and display Latino characters in multidimensional ways. It was also the last season of NLMC favorite, “Ugly Betty,” which was loaded with Latino talent in front and behind the camera, including breakout star America Ferrera, Tony Plana, Ana Ortiz, Mark Indelicato and recurring characters portrayed by Adam Rodriguez and Freddy Rodriguez. NLMC will miss “Betty,” a brave show that took on important issues impacting the Latino community and society as a whole. ABC earned a “B” for scripted actors because, although its number of scripted regulars increased slightly, its number of Latinos in recurring roles dropped significantly from the previous year. It earned a “C” in reality actors because the number of Latinos in this category was nearly cut in half.

NLMC commends ABC for its steady dedication to employing Latino writers and producers. This category is of great import, as the writers and producers tell our stories. ABC has earned an “A” in this category for many consecutive years, and NLMC applauds the network for building on its progress yet again this year, adding two additional Latino producers to its already impressive list. In addition, 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 many NLMC program graduates over the years, including Rafael Garcia, Leslie Valdez, Davah Avena, Mark Valadez, Gina Monreal , Sierra Ornelas and Miguel Becerra.

NLMC also praises ABC for its ongoing success in finding diverse vendors and professionals for in its procurement. ABC maintains its “A” grade in this category.

Program development is another area in which ABC has excelled. NLMC looks forward to the large number of Latino-themed and Latino-created shows coming down the pike for the 2011-2012 season, and believes that these efforts, if successful, will help bring ABC back to being a frontrunner on inclusion of Latinos. ABC earns an “A” in this category.

Unfortunately, ABC has not been as successful in finding and retaining Latino directors. Last year we criticized ABC for its declining numbers in this area, and regrettably the numbers declined slightly more this year, which is why ABC has earned a “D+” in this category. To its credit, ABC has developed a “shadow director” program in which it is training promising director-hopefuls, four of whom are Latinos. This effort was factored into NLMC’s decision to give ABC an “A” in commitment to diversity, however, until these shadow directors assume the helm in directing full episodes, they will not be counted in the director category.

ABC has run into a similar snag in terms of Latino entertainment executives. Last year it had one, and this year, none at all. It is the only network without a Latino entertainment executive with influence over the network's creative decisions. Thus, it has received an "F" in this category. NLMC recognizes that the ABC-Disney family has three Latino executives in notable positions: Marla Provencio, the sole Executive Vice President of Marketing for ABC; Bob Mendez, Senior Vice President of Diversity for ABC Television Group; and Carolina Lightcap, President of Disney Channels Worldwide. This was considered in NLMC's decision to give ABC an "A" in commitment to diversity. However, because none of these individuals are ABC entertainment executives with control over creative decisions, they do not count towards ABC's entertainment executive grade.

NBC

NBC has declined in a few categories, however, it has improved in others, leading to its overall "B-" grade. Although there is still substantial room for improvement at NBC, it did slightly better than last year, and NLMC hopes that this momentum continues if and when Comcast acquires NBC Universal. NLMC will be watching closely to ensure that Comcast's takeover does not adversely impact the progress that NBC has made in its diversity efforts. Positive progress includes a significant increase in Latino reality actors, program development and entertainment executives. However, NBC is struggling with other important aspects, including a pathetically low number of Latino actors on its scripted programming, and disappointing numbers of Latino writers, producers and directors.

NLMC is extremely displeased with the number of Latino actors on NBC's scripted programming. NBC lost, and did not replace, half of its Latino regulars, and over 90% of its Latino recurring actors. These figures are unacceptable, resulting in a "D-" grade in this area. NLMC wishes that NBC will increase dynamic Latino roles in next season's lineup, such as those portrayed by Audrey Plaza on "Parks and Recreation," NHMC Impact Award-winning actor, Oscar Nunez on "The Office," and Josh Gomez on "Chuck."

On the other hand, NBC receives an "A" for its Latino reality actors, almost doubling this number from last year. Bringing more Latinos into its reality programming makes this programming truly more realistic, as it portrays the country's increasing diversity, and the prominence of Latinos, who are estimated to make up over 15% of the U.S. population. It also produces great stars, including "Last Comic Standing" winner, the very-funny, Felipe Esparza, who has already given back to the Latino community with his performance at the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute's 2010 Reyes of Comedy charity event.

NBC must improve its number of writers, producers and directors in the current and coming seasons. NLMC noted a need for more Latino writers and producers in last year's report cards, yet these numbers have remained stagnant, resulting in a "C+" grade. NLMC is proud to partner with NBC in its Writer's Program, and encourages the network to go to this talent pool when

hiring new writers. Additionally, last year NLMC expressed that NBC was falling short on Latino directors, yet both the number of Latino directors as well as the number of Latino-directed episodes declined yet again, resulting in a “C-” grade in this category.

NBC’s program development shows great commitment to promoting Latino-themed programs and including Latinos in mainstream shows. NLMC applauds NBC for premiering “Outlaw” and “The Event” in its 2010-2011 season, two shows that depict a Latino as a former Supreme Court Justice, and the President of the United States, respectively, although we regret that “Outlaw,” starring Jimmy Smits, has already been cancelled after only a few episodes aired. Nonetheless, NBC has so many other Latino-themed and Latino-created shows in production for the 2011-2012 season. Several Latinos have been retained to create and write new shows, and several promising programs are already underway, including one that NLMC is particularly excited about, based on best-selling novelist Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez’ “The Dirty Girls Social Club,” which tells the tale of six college friends – all of Latina background in some way – and their various lives, loves and dramas. NBC gets an “A” in this category.

NBC receives a “B” grade for its procurement with Latino contractors. Although the numbers appear to be decent, NBC did not offer the number as transparently as NLMC would have liked.

Last year NBC received an “F” in the category of Entertainment Executives, however, this year NBC gets an “A” with three Latinos currently serving in this capacity. Congratulations to NBC for its efforts to improve this area.

NBC has ramped up its outreach to the Latino community over the past year with a significant list of programs aimed towards diversifying the network. In addition, NBC has voluntarily provided NLMC with data on NBC Universal’s cable television networks. Finally, NLMC was delighted with an episode that aired on “Law and Order: Special Victims Unit” during the 2009-2010 season, highlighting the dangers of hate speech in media. This is a very serious issue that is dear to the hearts of many NLMC members, and a top priority for NLMC Secretariat, the National Hispanic Media Coalition. Hate crimes against Latinos, immigrants and those appearing to be Latinos and immigrants are at an all-time high. Some evidence suggests that hate speech in media may be causing these crimes. We thank “Law and Order” creator Dick Wolf for courageously taking on this grave issue. Although getting the procurement numbers from NBC was not the easiest process, because of its ambitious agenda to increase diversity within the network NBC gets a “B” in this category.

CBS

NLMC congratulates CBS for earning the best overall grade of all of the networks for Latino diversity during the 2009-2010 television season. CBS did not receive any lower than a “B-” in any category, and overall it earned a “B+” grade. That said, CBS certainly has room for improvement. In particular, it must increase its number of Latino scripted regulars and Latino reality actors, as well as its Latino writers, producers and directors.

Several years ago CBS had over twenty Latino regulars on its scripted programs, but since the 2008-2009 season that number has reduced by more than 50%. However, CBS increased its number of Latino recurring actors by 150% since last season, thus earning a “B+” for scripted actors. The successful “NCIS” prominently features Cote de Pablo as a spunky criminal investigator, and several Latino actors reoccurred on this program last season. “CSI Miami” also features a number of Latino regular and recurring actors, including Eddie Cibrian, Eva La Rue, Judy Echavez, Adam Rodriguez and Ramon Fernandez. CBS more than doubled its number of Latino reality actors, however, the number remains rather low. CBS earns a “B+” in this category based on its improvement, and we hope to see this number increase yet again next year.

CBS needs improvement in the number of Latinos it employs as writers, producers and directors. Although CBS slightly increased its number of Latino producers from last year, it lost a couple of Latino writers. CBS must increase its Latino writers to ensure that it is depicting its Latino characters fairly and accurately. CBS earns a “B-” in this category. NLMC was discouraged that both the number of Latino directors and the number of Latino-directed episodes dropped substantially this year from last year. However, CBS is still doing better in this category than any of the other networks, therefore, it gets a “B-” grade for directors.

CBS earns an “A” in program development, with an impressive number of programs being developed with Latino creators, writers and producers for the 2011-2012 season.

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 serves as Vice President of Drama Development, and Edy Mendoza is Vice President of Comedy Development. CBS gets an “A” in this category.

The numbers don’t lie: CBS’ commitment to diversity is apparent. In addition, CBS has a number of programs designed to increase diversity at the network, including its own writers mentoring program. NLMC was also pleased to see that CBS broadcasted PSAs over its public airwaves to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. Thus, CBS gets an “A” on commitment to diversity and transparency.

FOX

Fox has a number of areas in which it needs improvement, however, it has some notable highlights as well. Fox has done well with recruiting Latino reality actors, Latino writers and producers, and has three Latino entertainment executives. That said, Fox’s numbers are very difficult to verify because it does not produce the names of the employees for which it takes credit. Lack of transparency has been an ongoing problem with Fox, and NLMC urges that Fox improve upon this next year. Latinos are underrepresented at Fox in several areas, including scripted actors, directors, and procurement. Fox’s overall grade is a “C+”.

The number and percent of Latino scripted actors in both regular and reoccurring roles has decreased since last season, and has continued to slope downwards for the past several years. Fox must turn this around. Notable Latinas on Fox's smash hit "Glee," include Lea Michele Sarfarti, who is of Spanish descent and identifies as a Latina, and Naya Rivera, who portrays Santana Lopez, recurring in nineteen episodes in the 2009-2010 season, and a series regular in the 2010-2011 season. Fox receives a "D-" in this category because of its troubling decline as well as its lack of transparency. On the other hand, Fox receives an "A" for reality programming, almost doubling the amount of Latinos in those shows.

NLMC commends Fox on its number of Latino writers and producers. It improved upon its numbers from last year, which were already quite impressive. It gets an "A" in this category.

In contrast, Fox continues to struggle with its Latino directors in primetime programming. The number of Latino directors and Latino-directed episodes declined from last year. Thus, Fox receives a "C" in this area. However, NLMC would be remiss not to mention that a Latina directed nineteen episodes of Fox's late night program, "The Wanda Sykes Show." This is praiseworthy, but since this report card is focused on primetime programming, that statistic was not factored into Fox's director grade. It was, however, considered in Fox's grade on commitment to diversity and transparency.

Fox has several deals in development with Latino writers and producers, however, this number has decreased significantly since last year, which is disconcerting. NLMC looks forward to seeing Jennifer Lopez judge the tenth season of "American Idol," and to seeing more development deals between Fox and Latino creators in the coming years. Fox gets a "B" grade in this category.

This year Fox's procurement with Latinos decreased from its already dismal levels. Fox's reporting of the numbers is confusing, arguably intentionally so, leaving us no choice but to give it an "F" in this category.

For the third straight year Fox will receive an "A" in entertainment executives. Fox has three Latino entertainment executives.

NLMC is 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 before next year's report cards. Were it not for its impressive directing numbers on "The Wanda Sykes Show" and other programs designed to enhanced diversity, Fox would have received an "F" in this category. As it stands, it gets a "C".

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"Report Card" on Television Diversity

Categories	ABC	NBC	FOX	CBS
Actors: On-air Primetime <i>Scripted</i> Shows	B	D-	D-	B+
Actors: On-air Primetime <i>Reality</i> Shows	C	A	A	B+
Writers and Producers: Primetime	A	C+	A	B
Directors: Primetime	D+	C-	C	B-
Program Development	A	A	B	A
Procurement	A	B	F	A
Entertainment Creative Executives	F	A	A	A
Network Commitment to Diversity Initiatives and Submission of Data	A	B	C	A
OVERALL GRADE FOR 2010	B-	B-	C+	B+