



ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE ON LATINA INEQUITIES
INFORMATIONAL HEARING
Unseen Latinas in Hollywood
Friday, April 23, 2021

Public Comment: Alicia Zaragoza, Assistant Director

It's good to be here this morning, my name is Alicia Zaragoza.

I would like to thank Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez and the Committee members for holding this critical hearing on Unseen Latinas in Hollywood.

I am an Assistant Director, and a proud member of the Directors Guild of America, and one of three co-chairs of our Guild's Latino Committee.

The Latino Committee is one of our six diversity committees, where members from underrepresented groups build community, celebrate one another's achievements, attend program training, create networking events and bring industry attention to our lack of representation.

As the union representing directors and members of the directorial team in film and television, we believe diverse voices and perspectives reflected on screen is imperative to the wellbeing and development of our society. That's at the heart of our longstanding diversity and inclusion work.

While as a labor union, the DGA does not control employer hiring. We have, however, for decades been concerned about the opportunities available for women and people of color to work in this industry. We have worked for a very long time to push the studios and other employers in film and television to increase their hiring of women and people of color.

That effort dates back over four decades when a group of women Directors mobilized to address the discriminatory hiring practices of entertainment industry employers. When the studios, networks and production companies failed to take significant action, the DGA sued on behalf of women and members of color.

We've since continued to dedicate significant time and resources in growing our efforts throughout our Guild operations -- ranging from collective bargaining gains and one-on-one meetings with employers, to developing diversity programs, mentorship initiatives and issuing highly publicized inclusion reports that bring attention to employers' hiring records. In fact, in our most recent report examining the hiring of directors in television, we saw progress in the hiring of directors of color overall, the same could not be said with respect to the hiring of Latina and Latino directors who continue to be egregiously underrepresented.

The Guild will also be issuing a report on the hiring of the directorial team members like myself. The preliminary data confirms the same glaring lack of Latina, Latino representation.

How is it possible that this global industry headquartered in Los Angeles where Latinos make up over 47% of the population, the industry refuses to hire us year after year?

I moved to Los Angeles from Chicago because it is the heart of the entertainment industry. I have been working for 20 years to achieve success, I know first-hand as an assistant director trying to break in, just how unlevel the playing field really is.

As freelance worker in an insular, relationship-driven industry, it is a particular struggle for Latinas to establish themselves. Many do not have the benefit of connections to get our foot in the door. A higher proportion of Latinas come from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, we do not have the benefit of interning, work for free or very little pay in assistant positions.



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While diversity and inclusion have been trendy media topics recently, the quick fix employers have made are mainly, talent in front of the camera or in positions "above- the- line". But to truly make a difference in our community, representation must be afforded to all industry workers employed in film and television. We are one of the few industries where unions have remained strong providing well paid, middle-class jobs offering benefits and pensions.

My Guild and other unions have worked tirelessly on initiatives that help. But reaching critical mass won't be about having enough diversity programs. It will be about changing the attitudes and perspectives of the gatekeepers who control hiring – to help develop and identify talent that comes in many diverse packages and backgrounds.

Thank you once again Assemblywoman Gonzalez, for bringing this problem to the forefront and giving us this opportunity to be heard and we look forward to working with you on solutions that can make lasting change.