



Annual Assessment for the 2020 – 21 Broadcast TV Season

1. Introduction

Film, television and other visual media platforms are mirrors into our society. They play an immense role in shaping and reinforcing beliefs and attitudes about race, cultures and stereotypes. The lack of representation (and misrepresentation) of our Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, served to fuel disassociation and intolerance, resulting in the rise in hate and violence. In fact, findings from [The Asian American Foundation's STAATUS Index](#) released in the Spring of 2022, over 58% of Americans were not able to name a single prominent Asian American – Jackie Chan topped the list of responses at only 7% (while not being American). The Index also revealed that 21% of Americans in 2022 agreed with the false statement that Asian Americans are at least partly responsible for COVID-19, compared to 11% agreeing with that statement in 2021.

Furthermore, it has been well-documented that media entities that address and increase diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in front of, and behind the camera, see greater viewership and engagement. [Nielsen's Asian American Audiences and On-Screen Representation Report](#) released in May of 2022 reports that AANHPI onscreen representation increased to 4.6% in 2021, from 3.5% in 2020. While this reflects a notable increase, it is still below parity, as the AANHPI population of the United States is at 6.4% according to the 2020 Census. This segment of the population has over \$1.3 trillion in buying power, is seeing almost a 40% population growth in the last 10 years and had 2.1 trillion minutes of viewing power in 2021. Similarly, [UCLA's 2022 Hollywood Diversity Report: Television](#) released in October of 2022, evidences that data from the 2020-21 television season supports findings suggesting that America's increasing diverse audiences prefer diverse television content. Overall social media engagement peaked in 2020-21 for broadcast scripted shows with casts that were from 31 – 40 percent minority. Yet again, the AANHPI representation was less than the US population:

- ASIAN LEADS FOR BROADCAST SCRIPTED TV 2020-21 Season:
 - Broadcast 3.8%
 - Cable 1.9%
 - Digital (Streamers) 3.2%
- ASIAN SHARE OF ROLES FOR BROADCAST SCRIPTED TV 2020-21 Season:
 - Broadcast 5.5%
 - Cable 3.5%
 - Digital (Streamers) 4.6%

Hollywood can no longer afford to just listen – the narrative must change, and action must be taken.

2. The Asian American Media Alliance (AAMA)

In May 2020, the Asian Pacific American Media Coalition (APAMC), released its annual [Report Cards for the Broadcast Networks' 2018 – 19 Season](#), from data obtained from the Diversity Equity & Inclusion (DEI) departments of the Broadcast Networks. Since 1999, the APAMC (along with the Multi-Ethnic Media Coalition comprised of American Indians in Film & TV, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Latino Media Council (now the National Hispanic Media Coalition)) has agreements (Memoranda of Understanding, or MOUs) with ABC, CBS, FOX and NBC committing them to work to increase diversity on-screen and behind the camera.

With the effect of the pandemic and the rise in Anti-Asian hate crimes, the APAMC reorganized and restructured to become the Asian American Media Alliance (AAMA). With our mission to fully empower the AANHPI communities by advocating for our full inclusion and representation in visual entertainment media, the following were enacted:

- Electing the Leadership Team of Milton Liu (Interim Executive Director), Thu Nguyen (Chair), Kavneet Singh (Vice-Chair) and Daniel Mayeda (Chair Emeritus);
- Electing Affiliate Organizations to the AAMA; and
- Broadening our scope to include not just Broadcast Network programming, but additional television programming from cablers and streamers, and narrative and documentary feature films.

3. Broadcast Networks 2020 – 21 Assessment

The film and television industry saw drastic changes due to the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift in consumer viewing habits, the proliferation of SVOD platforms and cable cord-cutting has created an unstable landscape. Furthermore, the past decade of media mergers (including the Warner Bros. and Discovery merger and the acquisition of 21st Century Fox by Disney) has only served to increase this volatility. According to the [Writers Guild of America West's December 2021 Report entitled, "Broken Promises: Media Mega-Mergers and the Case for Antitrust Reform,"](#) media mergers face little to no antitrust enforcement, and in turn, consumers saw price hikes, fewer streaming choices and less diversity of content.

The AAMA's predecessor regularly graded the four major Broadcast Television Networks on DEI and issued Report Cards for each broadcast season based largely on numerical criteria. However, as part of its restructuring, the Alliance announced that it wished to focus on increased dialogue with the Networks and to provide more of a narrative Assessment of each Network's progress toward advancing DEI, rather than issuing letter grades. This was met with tremendous enthusiasm from the DEI departments at the Networks.

However, as the Alliance prepared for meetings with the Networks, the Networks balked at providing data for Asian Pacific Islander (API) creatives for the 2020 – 21 Season as stipulated in

our MOU Agreement. Only CBS produced its complete DEI data (and FOX provided incomplete data only after being challenged of AAMA's release of our Assessment in January of 2023). Therefore, CBS (and to a lesser degree, FOX) are the only Networks that can truly be assessed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The evaluations for ABC and NBC for the 2020-21 Season are mainly dependent on publicly available and incomplete information, and are limited due to their lack of participation as agreed upon by our MOU.

*Note that the AAMA understands the COVID-19 pandemic created a decrease in the overall production of television programming, resulting in a decrease in the hiring of creative talent across the board. However, percentage amounts of API talent creatives should not decrease as compared to the whole.

CBS

As a reminder, the data evaluation for this Assessment is for the 2020 – 21 Broadcast Network Season. CBS has also provided data for each category for the 2021 – 22 Season.

Actors: During the 2020 – 21 Season, CBS had 12 (7.2%) API **Scripted Regular Actors** on its series, a drop from the previous season's 18 (9.0%). This was mainly due to "Hawaii Five-O" coming off the schedule (resulting in the loss of 7 API regulars) but adding a few new shows like "Clarice" (Kal Penn) and "United States of AI" (Adhir Kalyan). However, subsequent the 2020-21 Season, "Clarice" was cancelled in 2021 and "United States of AI" cancelled in 2022. Also, 2022 was the last season of "Magnum P.I." on CBS (it will move to NBC for 2023). That series only had two API regular actors (Amy Hill and Tim Kang) despite being set in a location that is majority API. **Scripted Recurring Actors** went down from 33 (13.75%) to 13 (6.95%), largely due to "God Friended Me," "Tommy" and "Hawaii Five-O" not being renewed for 2020-21.

However, "NCIS: Hawai'i" (with API showrunner Larry Teng, co-creator Matt Bosack, and regular actors Vanessa Lachey, Alex Tarrant, Yasmine Al-Bustami, Kian Talan and Mahina Napoleon) debuted in the Fall of 2021 and is not reflected in the 2020 – 21 Assessment. Accordingly, with the data CBS provided for the 2021 – 22 Season, API **Scripted Regular Actors** increased to 17 (10.5%). We look forward to hearing if the show will be renewed for a third season in 2023.

Unscripted/Alternative Talent: CBS continues to shine in this area due to the strength of their unscripted/alternative programming, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. API **Unscripted/Alternative Talent** total numbers fell slightly, but percentages increased slightly from 13 (12.0%) to 9 (12.5%). This is mainly due to one season of "Survivor" and "Game On!" not being on the 2020 – 21 Season. CBS states that for the 2021 – 22 Season there was an improvement to 16 (13.0%) API **Unscripted/Alternative Talent**.

Daytime Talent: API **Daytime Talent** decreased from 24 (10.0%) to 15 (7.85%), largely due to a decrease in programming. CBS sees this slight decline continuing for the 2021 – 22 Season with API **Daytime Talent** at 10 (6.9%).

Writers/Producers: In an encouraging sign, CBS' API **Writers/Producers** increased from 15 (5.6%) to 19 (8.4%), including keeping steady at the EP and Co-EP level with 5. It should be noted that for the 2021 – 22 Season, "Clarice" (1 Co-EP) and "MacGuyver" (1 EP) was not renewed; and for the 2022 – 23 Season, "Magnum PI" (1 Co-EP) will no longer be a part of CBS programming. We look forward to recognizing the EPs and writers for "NCIS: Hawai'i" for those Seasons. For the 2021 – 22 Season, CBS saw an increase in API **Writers/Producers** to 27 (12.1%).

Directors: Unique API **Directors** of CBS shows decreased from 17 (6.3%) and 25 episodes directed (5.6%) to 8 (4.9%) and 15 episodes directed (4.5%), respectively, partly due to the cancellation of "Hawaii-Five-O" in 2020. With the inclusion of data for "NCIS: Hawai'i" for the 2021 – 22 Season, CBS was able to show an improvement in the number of unique API **Directors** to 13 (6.2%) with 17 episodes directed (4.5%).

Development: In **Drama Development**, 14 of the 110 pitches (13%) heard included API auspices, and 9 of the 28 (32%) projects bought included API auspices. Of the specs read, 7 out of 111 (6%) included API auspices. Of the projects picked up to pilot/series, 1 out of 5 (20.0%) were from API auspices, and 4 out of 5 (80%) pilots included at least one API character.

In **Comedy Development**, 26 of the 151 pitches (17%) heard included API auspices. Of the specs read, 5 out of 91 (6%) included API auspices. Of the projects picked up to pilot/series, 0 out of 5 (0.0%) were from API auspices. In discussions with CBS' DEI Department, the 2022 – 23 Season is the first time in its history that no new comedies were picked up.

Commitment to Diversity: CBS' DEI Department is consistent and highly engaged with the community. In 2020 – 21, CBS held 9 casting workshops/outreach at colleges as part of its CBS On Tour program. It continues to have its signature annual Talent Sketch Comedy Showcase (4/15 APIs had recurring work on shows in 2021), ViacomCBS Directing Initiative (3 of the 4 cohorts in 2021 are API) and ViacomCBS Writers Mentoring Program (6 of the 10 cohorts in 2021 are API). The most recent Talent Showcase '23 aired this past January 2023.

Diversity Dept. Relationship: CBS continues to present thorough and understandable data and the Alliance values our outstanding relationship with CBS' Diversity Department. However, we want to remain vigilant in our dialogue with CBS that they are not only increasing opportunities available for API creative talent, but also opportunities for higher level positions (eg, Scripted Regular and Lead Actors, and Executive-Producer-Level Writers).

FOX

After repeated requests for API creative talent data, FOX only provided incomplete data once AAMA relayed that the Assessment was going to be released. There has been no dialogue as to the certification of the data.

Actors: During the 2020 – 21 Season, FOX had 8 (6.1%) API **Scripted Regular Actors** on all of its series, which is slightly down from the previous season (6.24%). For live action scripted (not including animation), FOX had 6 (6.8%) API Scripted Regular Actors on its series, up from 5 (5.95%) the previous season.

“The Cleaning Lady” from Executive Producers Miranda Kwok and Shay Mitchell, stars Elodie Yung, Martha Millan, Sean Lew and Sebastian and Valentino LaSalle, debuted the following season (2021 – 22), which is not reflected in this report. As of now, FOX expects API Scripted Regulars for the 2021 – 2022 Season to be at 13 (10.8%).

For the 2020-21 Season, FOX had 7 API **Scripted Guest Star/Recurring Actors** appearing on 5 out of 8 **new scripted series**. Correspondingly, FOX had 11 API **Scripted Guest Star/Recurring Actors** appearing on 4 out of 10 **returning scripted series**. Combined, FOX had a total of 18 API **Scripted Guest Star/Recurring Actors** appearing on 9 out of 18 total scripted series. There was no information on the total amount of **Scripted Guest Star/Recurring Actors** for FOX scripted series.

Unscripted/Alternative Talent: Ken Jeong stars in three series, “The Masked Singer”, “The Masked Dancer” and “I Can See Your Voice”, along with “FOX New Year’s Eve Special”. In addition, Nicole Scherzinger is also a panelist on “The Masked Singer”. During the 2020 – 21 Season FOX’s API representation across **Unscripted/Alternative** was 13.3% (4 out of 30), which is up from the previous season (10%).

Writers/Executive Producers: API **Writers/Producers** decreased from 14 to 12 or 5.5% to 3.8%, consisting of 9 API **Writers** and 3 **Executive Producers**. However, it should be noted that for the 2021 – 22 Season, “The Cleaning Lady” joined FOX’s schedule including Executive Producers Miranda Kwok and Shay Mitchell.

Directors: API **Directors** of FOX scripted series decreased from 14 to 11 (out of 117), registering a total of approximately 9.4% for the 2020 – 21 Season. It should be noted that due to production shutdowns, pandemic programming was more unscripted during this period. Even as this may be the case, FOX provided no information on API Directors of their unscripted programming.

Development: FOX provided no data on their Drama or Comedy Development for the 2020 – 21 Season, except to mention that all of their pilots for that season were written by women (5 pilots).

Commitment to Diversity: FOX has shown improvements in diversity, equity and inclusion with recent initiatives such as the FOX Writers Incubator (launched in February 2022), FOX Alternative Entertainment’s Fastrack (launched December 2020), and being a founding launch partner for ARRAY Crew (a personnel database for Hollywood’s below-the-line crew members with a special focus on the amplification of women, people of color and other underrepresented film and television professionals). However, with no further data, it’s impossible to extrapolate qualitative and quantitative measures of success, especially in regard to API creatives.

Diversity Dept. Relationship: Due to the Disney / FOX merger in 2019, the AAMA understood that DEI reporting from FOX might at least temporarily be less robust; but we believed that FOX still intended to promote greater diversity and inclusion at the network. And when the AAMA reached out in the Fall of 2021 to inform the FOX DEI Department of our restructuring, it was met with excitement and enthusiasm. However, as multiple requests for data were made, communications from FOX ceased. It wasn’t until the Alliance informed FOX of the pending release of our Assessment that any data was provided, which allowed no time to discuss the matter with FOX’s Diversity Department. This highlights a major lost opportunity for FOX. Again, the AAMA serves not only a role in accountability, but also in advocacy – including the potential to promote FOX shows such as “The Masked Singer” and “The Cleaning Lady” that reflect positively on our community. In the case of the “The Cleaning Lady”, [Define American’s third study with USC’s Norman Lear Center](#) released in December 2022, finds immigrant representation has shifted in important ways. The viewership of this show is almost split equally between being watched by Liberals, Moderates and Conservatives. Of the show’s viewers, 54% said it increased their understanding of immigrant experiences, 61% said it increased their understanding of the sacrifices people must make to emigrate, and 41% said it increased their comfort around meeting a recent immigrant.

We hope for improved transparency, data reporting and communication from FOX, but until then the Diversity Dept. Relationship with the AAMA will continue to be inadequate.

ABC

It is very unfortunate that ABC’s Creative Talent Development & Inclusion (CTDI) Dept. has decided to not release their API creative talent data for the 2020 – 21 Season. The following are based on conversations with the Department, publicly available information, and a previously released report with their 2020 – 21 data as of July 2020 (the data is for shows aired on ABC and/or produced by ABC Studios & ABC Signature Studios before they were renamed to ABC Signature).

Actors: For ABC-aired shows, 8 out of 130 (6.2%) were API **Scripted Regular Actors**. This is down from the prior 2019 – 20 Season of 18 out of 185 (9.7%). For ABC Studios-produced shows, 11 out of 145 (7.6%) were API **Scripted Regular Actors**. This is slightly down from the prior 2019 – 20 Season of 16 out of 192 (8.1%). For API **Scripted Recurring Actors**, there is no data for the

2020 – 21 Season. However, for the 2019 – 20 Season of ABC-aired shows, 21 out of 270 were API Recurring Actors (7.8%); and for ABC Studios-produced shows, 24 out of 288 were API **Scripted Recurring Actors** (8.3%). With the non-renewal of “Fresh Off the Boat” and “Agents of SHIELD,” we expected API talent to decline somewhat.

For **Unscripted/Alternative Talent**, we have no data for the 2020 – 21 Season. However, for the 2019 – 20 Season of ABC-aired shows, 7 out of 81 were API **Unscripted Regulars Actors** (8.0%); and for ABC Studios-produced shows, 1 out of 8 were API **Unscripted Regular Actors** (12.5%).

Writers/Producers: For ABC-aired shows, 6 out of 43 (14.0%) **Writers** were API. This is up from the prior 2019 – 20 Season of 19 out of 306 (6.2%). For ABC Studios-produced shows, 1 out of 23 (4.3%) **Writers** were API. This is slightly up from the prior 2019 – 20 Season of 11 out of 284 (3.9%). For API **Episodes Written**, we have no data for the 2020 – 21 Season. However, for the 2019 – 20 Season of ABC-aired shows, 28 out of 507 episodes were from API Writers (5.5%); and for ABC Studios-produced shows, 17 out of 451 were from API Writers (3.8%).

For ABC-aired shows, 7 out of 169 (4.1%) **Producers** were API. This is down from the prior 2019 – 20 Season of 17 out of 260 (6.5%). For ABC Studios-produced shows, 9 out of 176 (5.1%) **Producers** were API. This is slightly down from the prior 2019 – 20 Season of 14 out of 262 (5.3%).

We continue to implore ABC to break out the levels for Writers and Producers.

Directors: For ABC-aired shows, we have no data for the 2020 – 21 Season for **Directors** (as the information is as of July 2020). However, for the 2019 – 20 Season of ABC-aired shows, 18 out of 202 **Directors** were API (8.9%). For ABC Studios-produced shows for the 2020 – 21 Season, 1 out of 19 (5.3%) **Directors** were API. This is down from the prior 2019 – 20 Season of 16 out of 196 (8.2%). For API **Episodes Directed**, we have no data for the 2020 – 21 Season. However, for the 2019 – 20 Season of ABC-aired shows, 27 out of 394 episodes were from API **Directors** (6.9%); and for ABC Studios-produced shows, 25 out of 382 were from API **Directors** (6.4%).

Commitment to Diversity: ABC’s Creative Talent Development & Inclusion Department historically has been at the forefront of diversity initiatives such as providing Community Strategy Sessions, Writing and Directing Programs, and Talent Showcases. Internally they are also building their own talent database for executives and producers. But we fear that ABC’s failure to maintain its partnership with AAMA by providing data on the representation and inclusion of APIs on the air and as creators may represent a decrease of its commitment to diversity.

Diversity Dept. Relationship: ABC’s data presentation has continually changed, leading to some confusion in consistency. With the addition of Disney+, Hulu, FX and other distribution platforms, it’s imperative that ABC stays on top of DEI in its programming and its communication to AAMA and the API community. Unfortunately, ABC has now declined to meet annually and to provide further diversity data for their programming – even with exciting

shows in production that include API creatives in front of, and behind the camera. This includes series such as “Doogie Kamealoha, MD” and “The Book of Boba Fett” (Disney+), and 2023 series such as “The Company You Keep” (ABC), “American Born Chinese” (Disney+), and “Interior Chinatown” (Hulu).

NBC

Along with ABC, NBC has declined to provide the Asian American Media Alliance with API data for the 2020 – 21 Season – the first time since 2000 they have refused to do so. This is unfortunate since the Alliance has communicated with the Networks that we would not solely be a watchdog, but would also provide outreach to our communities to advocate programming with API talent and creatives (e.g., NBC shows such as “Young Rock”, “Chicago Med”, the new “Quantum Leap” (starring Raymond Lee), and the new network for “Magnum P.I.”).

Also, NBC should lean into Bowen Yang being the first Chinese American cast member on Saturday Night Live (SNL), as well as the first SNL featured player to be nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award (2021). From the UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report, the leading Asian Household Rating for Broadcast for an NBC-aired show is SNL.

Furthermore, the Alliance wishes to champion diversity initiative programs such as the NBC TV Writers Program, however without information about API participation in such initiatives, we are hamstrung in doing so. NBC’s failure to maintain its partnership with AAMA is both an enormous disappointment and a major lost opportunity for it to regain the leadership role in advancing diversity it once held.

4. AAMA GOING FORWARD / STRATEGIC PLAN

As stressed earlier, the need for representation and narrative change is imperative for our AANHPI communities, especially in this ever-changing media landscape. Therefore, in bringing Affiliate Organizations to the Alliance – we will expand our future assessment reach to cablers, streamers and narrative and documentary feature films. We will continue to work with the Broadcast Networks, and also further our relationships with the Creative Guilds (DGA, PGA, SAG-AFTRA, WGA) and organizations such as the [Think Tank for Inclusion & Equity](#) (TTIE), [Nielsen](#), and [The Asian American Foundation](#) (TAAF) to compile media data. We also will be developing new television and film relationships with Lionsgate / STARZ (#TakeTheLead) and Warner Bros. Discovery.

Lastly, the Asian American Media Alliance will be sponsoring events throughout the year, which most recently included a Fall 2022 panel with the [Taiwan Creative Content Fest](#) featuring Soo Hugh (showrunner for “Pachinko”) and Jamie Lai (Head of Development & Production, Bound Entertainment – “Dr. Brain”), and the [Asian Pacific Filmmakers Experience](#) (APFE) at Sundance 2023 (in partnership with the [Sunrise Collective](#)). AAMA will continue with its participation with the APFE at the 2023 film festivals for SXSW, Tribeca and Toronto International.

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The Asian American Media Alliance (AAMA) Member Organizations include Asian Americans Advancing Justice—AAJC, East West Players, Japanese American Citizens League, National Coalition of Asian Pacific Americans, National Federation of Filipino American Associations, OCA—Asian Pacific American Advocates, Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund, and Visual Communications.

AAMA Affiliate Organizations include Asian American Documentary Network, Asian CineVision, Brown Girls Doc Mafia, Center for Asian American Media, Center for Asian Americans United for Self Empowerment, Hawai'i International Film Festival, Pacific Arts Movement and Vietnamese American Arts & Letters Association.