

iaU!

SUMMER 2025

JOURNAL

Change management for the creative industries

The DEI Hards

STANDING TALL AGAINST
ATTACKS ON DIVERSITY

Our full
Emergency
DEI Summit
Review

Allyship with
Women In
Streaming
Media

Can media
fix its white
supremacy
problem?

The New
Black Film
Collective &
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iAU!

JOURNAL

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WELCOME TO ¡AU!

GET READY TO HELP SOMEONE ELSE BE AMAZING

by Neal Romanek, Founder, ¡AU!

Welcome to ¡AU! Journal, a quarterly magazine helping media pros like you to manage change.

I've edited a good number of media & entertainment publications, covering tech, business, and creativity. My POV has usually been from the path less traveled.

When I was editor at TVBEurope, we started to push sustainability and to champion BAFTA albert when most people still believed the climate crisis would solve itself.

At FEED magazine we tried to offer a platform that could explain complex media technology ideas to very busy—but not always tech savvy—decisionmakers, while always fitting in stories of social responsibility from the industry when we could—what came to be called “DEI”.

The Flint was the industry's first publication—that I know of—dedicated full-time to sustainability in the media & entertainment sector.

We built a library of content on everything from sustainability in special fx to green issues around data centers. And we started what I hope will be an ongoing tradition of train-based networking (and partying) with The Flint Green Line, a networking event on a Eurostar carriage from London to Amsterdam.

¡AU! was launched this spring to provide content, networking, and creative services for a media industry navigating the most unpredictable period—commercially, socially, and creatively—it has faced in many decades.

There is a very bumpy ride ahead.

Whatever happens in the next decade, rest assured that it's going to be a surprise. Almost any prediction we can make is going to be off.

That's terrifying. But also exciting. As the expression goes: The only way out is through. Businesses that concentrate on moving and doing will be in much better shape than those holding on and digging in. The way to weather this storm is to create and innovate your way through it.

¡AU! spun up its first event in March, the Emergency DEI Summit (officially “Emergency summit on the collapse of DEI in the entertainment industry”) and was a response to the capitulation by major media companies to the radical anti-DEI stance in the US.

The Summit was made up of three online discussion panels, plus networking. That Summit content forms the basis of this first issue of ¡AU! Journal, where we go into some depth about the crisis of racism and sexism in the US, its immediate effects on the media industry, plus the potential chain reaction for



Photo by Ferdous Hasan

the industry globally. In addition to analysis, in the pages ahead, you'll also be able to access the video from each session.

Championing undersupported talent is a perfect theme for this launch issue of ¡AU! Journal. We take it as self-evident that art is, by definition, something that only humans do. If we want creative work to be the best it can be—if we want a creative industry that thrives, grows, prospers—we have to start with, and end with, nurturing and growing humans.

More and more we're taken in by the myth that all you need for success is a good idea and some good tech and the world is your oyster. While there are countless creatives out there running side hustles along those lines, a career that evolves and grows, has depth and longevity, requires more cultivation. If you pick the name of one of your creative heroes from a hat, you'll find that their story is full of people, institutions and circumstances that helped them along. There is no such thing as a self-made classic.

At ¡AU! our mission is to you connect with people and ideas that will help make your creative business prosper.

More importantly, we hope we can empower you to help other creative businesses, individuals, and projects prosper. It's well understood that getting other people to success increases the likelihood of your own.

We hope you enjoy this first issue of ¡AU! Journal. We also hope it makes you angry. And inspired. We hope you'll grow along with us. We look forward to hearing your stories and collaborating as we navigate the tricky times ahead together. And along the way I hope we can create something new and worthwhile and lasting.

Oh, and if you're still trying to figure out how to pronounce it, try saying "hey you"—loud. ●

WHAT NOW?

News & snapshots from an industry

Shareholders protect assets from anti-DEI threats

In February, anti-DEI think tank the [National Center for Public Policy Research](#) made a proposal to Apple shareholders to cut the company's diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives at the annual shareholder meeting. The "Request to Cease DEI Efforts" was voted down by 97%. Apple leadership said that the move "inappropriately attempts to restrict Apple's ability to manage its own ordinary business operations, people and teams, and business strategies."

The US President offered his assessment:

"APPLE SHOULD GET RID OF DEI RULES, NOT JUST MAKE ADJUSTMENTS TO THEM. DEI WAS A HOAX THAT HAS BEEN VERY BAD FOR OUR COUNTRY. DEI IS GONE!!!"

Despite the vote, Apple CEO Tim Cook said in the days following:

"As the legal landscape around this issue evolves, we may need to make some changes to comply, but our north star of dignity and respect for everyone and our work to that end will never waver."

The latest [Axios Harris Poll 100](#) which tracks company reputation showed companies that maintained DEI commitments saw a rise in their reputational rankings. Companies rolling back their DEI initiatives saw a decline. The Walt Disney Company, which has been cutting DEI efforts, saw a 10.8% drop in Axios reputation score since 2019, while Apple's reputation rating had risen by 1%.

Channel 4 Plugs into equity initiative

UK broadcaster Channel 4 has launched a new equity-focused initiative called [The Plug](#). The networking group is open to ethnically diverse members of the creative industry and aims to provide provide mentoring, networking, and masterclass webinars with industry leaders.

Founded by Channel 4 Sales staff Sigourney Quartey and Andrew Ukiwa, The Plug hopes to break down barriers and empower diverse voices with support, mentorship and community.

The new org has debuted with a video series, Creative Hot Takes, featuring insights from creative pros, including Arcane Media co-founder Jordan Schwarzenberger, Renaissance Studios founder Tamara Barton-Campbell, and director Ray Solace.

Women directors mean more diverse casting

A new study from Luminate analyzes the diversity of scripted live-action projects in the USA, UK, and Canada.

Among the findings in Luminate's Entertainment Diversity Progress Report are that projects with female directors had 12% more diverse casts than male directed-projects between the assessed period of 2021 to 2023. Also in 2023, LGBTQ+ and Black representation went up in film, but down in series TV.

In 2023, there were more Indigenous series creators than Latin/Hispanic creators, with both groups having 8 percent and 7 percent representation, respectively, both in front of and behind the camera.

Access the full report [here](#).

UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report sees representation gains at streamers

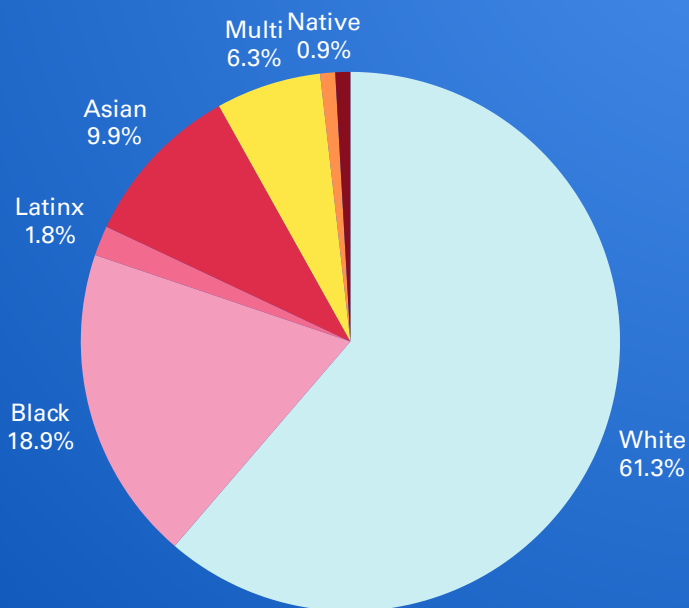
The second part of the UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2025 which focuses on streaming, notes gains in broader representation. The report observed that viewership from women and people of color contributed to the success of the top streaming films, and diversity in the casts in streaming films had grown from last year.

Streaming platforms continued to improve in the effort to increase diversity. Representation of women in acting roles in streaming productions grew last year, in contrast to women's presence in theatrical feature films which contracted. The majority of the top ten highest rated streaming films focused on female leads.

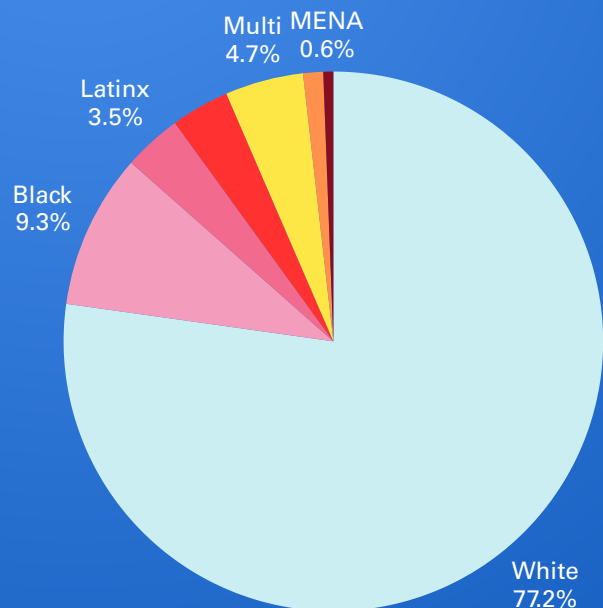
The UCLA report also found that half of all leads in streaming films were people of color, almost twice the representation for top theatrical releases. There were also improvements in the employment of directors, with around 40% of directors people of color, compared to 20% in theatrical feature films over the same period.

The report found that some BIPOC groups exceeded or approached proportionate representation as directors, though Latinx and multiracial directors continued to be underrepresented among the top streaming films. Native and MENA women directors outnumbered men in those groups. Among writers Black, Latinx, Asian, and multiracial writers continue to be underrepresented, while Native and MENA writers approached proportionate representation (see below).

Read the full report, UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2025, Part 2: Streaming [here](#).



Share of all streaming film directors, by race/ethnicity, 2024



Share of all streaming film writers, by race/ethnicity, 2024

Media tech community will Ignite at IBC show

The Global Media and Entertainment Talent Manifesto returns to the IBC show in Amsterdam this September for its second World Skills Café. This year's installment features an expanded skills and diversity program, plus the launch of Ignite – a mentoring programme for supporting people of color in media tech.

The World Skills Café happens Thursday, September 11, 2-5pm at the RAI Amsterdam, followed by networking drinks. The 2025 edition will host workshops, keynotes, and panels. Attendees will include pros from broadcast, streaming platforms, outside broadcast, studios, technology vendors, recruitment specialists, and education.

"There is a real need for the media and entertainment technology sector to unite in addressing talent and diversity challenges," said Carrie Wootten, Global Media and Entertainment Talent Manifesto Co-founder. "The 2025 World Skills Café will build on key foundations delivered last year and accelerate collaboration and practical advances across recruitment and skills development.

"Ignite reflects our commitment to empowering underrepresented talent at every career stage. We must act collectively and decisively to build a sustainable, inclusive future workforce."

Ignite aims to provide tailored mentoring partnerships that foster career development, build professional networks, and accelerate leadership pathways. Mentees of all levels, including younger professionals and students, are encouraged to apply – as well as industry professionals across production, broadcast, engineering and creative roles interested in becoming mentors.

"Mentoring is a catalyst for unlocking potential," said Jasmin John, Founder of Black Women in Post Production (BWIPP). "Ignite offers a vital platform for developing talent, confidence and career progression. We're thrilled to provide talented individuals with practical support that will help open up new opportunities across the industry."

Sam Fray, Founder of Black People in Sports Broadcasting, added: "Mentorship is a powerful driver for career progression, equipping professionals from underserved communities with both the skills and confidence to overcome industry barriers."

Registration to attend the World Skills Café is available [here](#).

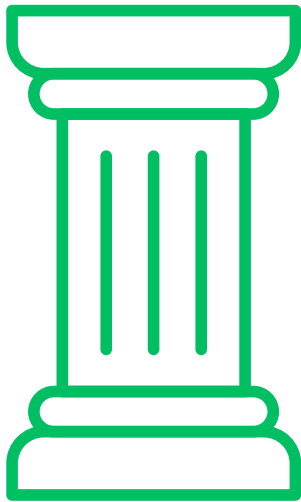
World Skills Café sponsors include Vizrt, Deluxe, IABM, DTG, TMT Insights, Amazon Web Services, Tysers (Insurance Partner), OneFootball, and Platform Communications.

Around the world in 26 hours

On October 16, the Global Media and Talent Manifesto will host a global student-led broadcast project. Dubbed "On Air", the project, spanning 26 hours and produced by teams from Auckland to Los Angeles, aims to be the world's largest student broadcast, delivering a continuous stream of original and pre-recorded content managed entirely by university and college students.

Each participating institution will contribute live programming, showcasing the emerging talent across the media production ecosystem.

Participating institutions include: Auckland University of Technology, Baltic Film and Media School, Hochschule der Medien Stuttgart, Hong Kong Design Institute, Lycée René Cassin - Biarritz, Media Cluster Norway, University of Sao Paulo in partnership with Faculdade Casper Libero, University of Surrey, University of Texas, and York University. Ravensbourne University London will be the central hub for master control room, layout control and operations.



What is the WSM ALLYSHIP PILLAR? And why should you join it?

by **Deepali Nariker**, Head of Allyship,
Women in Streaming Media

Women in Streaming Media gives visibility to women leaders in the streaming sector. Good partners are essential for success.

As a global networking organisation, the mission of Women in Streaming Media (WSM) is to increase diversity and give more visibility to women leaders in the streaming media industry.

To do this, WSM will create forums and events to connect women, provide mentorship and internship programs for nurturing women's participation and access to leadership roles, and promote opportunities to help women achieve their goals.

In 2024, WSM launched the Allyship Pillar. Allyship is more than an idea; it is an ongoing action. Like any part of company culture, allyship should be modelled at the top. It's a key element of leadership. Allyship means using your voice, influence, and privilege to support and stand with underrepresented communities. It's about challenging bias, amplifying others, and creating an inclusive workplace where everyone can thrive. With our Allyship Pillar, we create a network of allies leading by example.

The Allyship Pillar offers a flexible way to get involved with WSM. Through Ask Me Anything sessions, expert panels, hands-on workshops, and shared resources, we help people learn, share, and practice real-world allyship. Our Ally of the Month series highlights individuals making a meaningful impact. These monthly calls celebrate their efforts, share insights, and inspire others to take action. Over the past year, the Allyship

Pillar has sparked some vital conversations, on topics from inclusive leadership to creating lasting cultural change.

Allyship becomes even more important during challenging times. When systems are shifting, even small actions, like speaking up for a colleague or promoting under-represented voices, can have a big impact. In these moments, allyship isn't just helpful, it's essential.

At WSM, we believe lasting change comes from working together. Let's keep building momentum, lifting each other up, and encouraging more leaders to genuinely lead by example.

Ready to start your allyship journey or get involved? Reach out to us at:

allyship@womeninstreamingmedia.org.

We'd love to hear from you!



A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE AUDIENCE – AND OTHER LIES

LAU's Emergency DEI Summit convened organizations working to empower women in media industry roles. The rate of progress risks being overtaken by the rate of regression

The Emergency DEI Summit (official title: "Emergency summit on the collapse of DEI in the entertainment industry") started off with a temperature check on the place of women in the media industry pecking order. The good news is a lot of progress has been made. The bad news is that there is a lot of progress yet to be made.

The DEI Summit was spun up in response to the human rights collapse in the US and the speedy jettisoning of DEI initiatives by some big media companies in an attempt to appease the new US administration.

The current US government is more ostentatiously misogynist than any US government – possibly any Western government - in recent memory. In the case of the President, mistreatment of women has been part of his brand for decades. But his executive orders, supported by recent restrictions of women's rights by the US Supreme Court, accompanied by the destruction by DOGE of government agencies providing support, have made disempowering women national policy.

"Executive Orders" are really just memos from the Oval Office to the Executive Branch of the US government. They don't create new laws for the country, but—like a memo from the CEO—they can direct how employees of the executive branch conduct their work.

For example, in 1965 President Lyndon Johnson signed Executive Order 11246 which prohibited government contractors from discrimination in hiring based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or national origin. That Order was rescinded by the current President via another Executive Order in January 2025. Fortunately, many of those protections are still covered by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which is federal law and can't be changed without legislation from the US Congress.

The National Partnership for Women and Families laid out "20 ways the Trump administration has already harmed women and families" in March 2025. The impacts cited include particular repercussions in women's health and in the workplace, including threatening the implementation of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), and firing decisionmakers at the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Black and Asian women and part-time workers were the groups with the biggest union membership growth in 2024.



WATCH: Amy DeLouise, Sadie Groom and Kirsten Schaffer analyze the place of women in a very difficult time for the industry

The National Women's Law Center published a similar, more general, document, "[Donald Trump's first 100 days of Project 2025: Harms to women girls and LGBTQI+ people](#)". Well worth a read.

POWERFUL STUDIOS HAVE BEEN FIRST TO SURRENDER

The entertainment industry had already been rolling back its DEI programs before the new US administration came in, but after the 2024 election, big media companies fell over themselves to show the incoming president that they were willing to turn a cold shoulder to people who were not white men, if it would make for a more harmonious relationship with the new government.

Our DEI Emergency Summit panel "A woman's place is in the audience – and other lies" brought together three industry leaders who have spent years working on improving opportunities for women across media and entertainment. Amy DeLouise, founder of #GALSNGEAR, Sadie Groom, whose organization Rise gives women support for broadcast industry roles, and Kirsten Schaffer, CEO of WIF (Women In Film), gave their takes on how the roll back in the US industry could affect women.

What was apparent across all our Summit panels is that, despite the cruelty of the US government's new assault, marginalized people—women included—understand all too well that this struggle is ongoing. While there is progress, setbacks are also inevitable. Organizations can't let short term challenges divert them from their central mission.

"All three of us have been in the industry a long time," said #GALSNGEAR's Amy DeLouise, "What one particular country's administration is trying to do—and I want to point out Donald Trump is not the entirety of the US government, he's just one-third—doesn't necessarily change our through-line."

#GALSNGEAR works to support mid-career women in many areas that aren't always covered in their jobs, including skills in negotiating, managing teams and financial literacy – the steady work of empowerment.

"We're just plowing forward," DeLouise said. "We have members in the United States who are feeling the stress, and probably our friends in Canada and Mexico are as well."

INDUSTRY ORGS TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Rise, launched in the UK, but now with an ➡

Photo by Anna Shvets



international reach, has provided networks for women seeking entry to and career advancement in the broadcast industry, particularly in tech-related roles. Founder, Sadie Groom noted that economic factors have also chipped away at DEI initiatives.

Groom also runs the Bubble Agency, a PR company primarily serving broadcast tech vendors. Given the economic stresses in the industry, including the pandemic and strikes, she has seen marketing budgets among the first cuts companies make. But DEI outlay is now being jettisoned even before marketing. Support for organizations like Rise had already been shrinking.

But there is undoubtedly something very new happening now. The new government had only been in power two months when jAU!'s Emergency DEI Summit was held, but the shift in atmosphere was already dramatic.

"We're definitely seeing a backslide in the industry," WIF's Kirsten Schaffer confirmed. "The pressure that companies felt in the era of #MeToo and Black Lives Matter to focus on

diversity, equity and inclusion isn't there anymore. I've heard anecdotally from women in decision-making rooms that now people will say things like, "We don't have to make sure our list is 50/50 anymore" or 'We don't have to make sure that there's a woman of color on the list'. Before, nobody would say that out loud. They might think it, but it's not what they would do."

Schaffer also pointed to economics as an additional lever used to squash DEI action.

"There's a scarcity mentality because the business is changing so much...The companies are fearful that unless they stay on the right side of the President it will impact their bottom line. These things are making it a tough environment for women, for anyone who's gender diverse, and anybody from other underrepresented identities."

WHAT GETS MEASURED GETS DONE

DeLouise emphasized that "DEI" is essentially a common sense approach to business and society. She quoted a recent statement from former US Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg: "'The opposite of diversity is uniformity. the opposite of equity is inequity, and the opposite inclusion is exclusion'. Nobody wants those things, not even white guys. I'm the mother of two white boys and

"We are all under attack and we really are stronger together"

Kirsten Schaffer



I can tell you that all of their friends are massively diverse and they live in a world that is diverse. They believe in that innately."

But from time immemorial lasting positive change has never happened based on good intentions and beliefs. The "benevolent CEO" is held up as a necessary ingredient for change, but those enlightened CEO's who were pushing for DEI initiatives in 2024 are cutting them in 2025. Or if they aren't, they're in danger of being replaced by executives who will. Whether it's providing opportunity or amending injustices, independent guidelines and frameworks are essential.

"What gets measured gets done," said DeLouise. "It's concerning that some companies are going to stop measuring, but that doesn't mean other people aren't still measuring."

One of the—almost certainly deliberate—results of the dismantling of government institutions by the Elon Musk-headed "Department Of Government Efficiency" is to disable institutions and government bodies who have been mandated to keep records, monitor change, and produce analysis. As government offices for monitoring the quality of life and of work for women get shut down, it becomes harder to analyze and measure – and implement – positive change.

The attack on DEI runs parallel to the attack on LGBTQ+ people - trans people especially. Regrettably, there was no trans representation on our panel, but ¡AU! will be working on events centering LGBTQ+ creatives in the future.

Schaffer underlined WIF's inclusivity principles in the organization's approach to gender inclusion:

"We changed our name years ago, from Women In Film to WIF, because gender equality is about gender diversity...Right now it's really important for cisgender women to not abandon our non-binary and transgender community, because they really need us. They are massively under attack in in the US. Sometimes, I hear tiny voices saying 'We should just stand up for women because women are under attack'; but we are all under attack and we really are stronger together." 🟡



BIG CHANGES WILL REQUIRE A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

By Amy DeLouise, Founder, [GALSNGEAR.tv](https://galsngear.tv)



Photos courtesy #GALSNGEAR

#GALSNGEAR prepares women for leadership in media industry tech roles. Its Leadership Summit earlier this year offered education, support and networking

We used to call it “group think,” and we learned the hard way that, whether solving an engineering problem or putting together a marketing plan, it didn’t always lead to the best outcomes.

The opposite of group think is cultivating diverse perspectives. It takes more work. But it delivers dividends. Literally.

A study by BlackRock found that companies with the most balanced gender representation achieved a remarkable 7.7% average annual return on assets (RoA) over the past decade.

Another study by McKinsey & Company showed that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity were 25% more likely to deliver above-average profitability than those in the bottom quartile. Surveying 22,000 firms globally, Peterson Institute for International Economics found that increasing the number of women in the C-suite from 0% to 30% results in a one percentage point increase in net margin. This translates to a 15% increase in profitability for a typical firm.

But let’s be clear. The data isn’t saying that sprinkling some women into your leadership makes for higher profits. But it does point to the fact that companies who consistently cultivate and retain a culture of diverse perspectives are more likely to succeed. And despite the hype about “AI taking our jobs,” the reality is we’ll need more people, not fewer, to harness Gen AI. We also need a new broadcast workforce skilled in robotics, virtual production, 2110, and IP-based workflows.



Add to this the urgent need for constant upskilling to replace the so-called “great retirement” of baby boomers and you have the perfect storm: more need than ever for a multi-faceted and upskilled workforce.

This is why the media industry needs to embrace programs that ensure that all those people 8-12 years into their careers in technical positions, including women, feel supported as they grow into management and leadership roles.

BUILDING SKILLS

Helping our sector—and the people in it—thrive been the work of many organizations over many years, including #GALSNGEAR. Our training focuses on four pillars: developing your unique

qualities to lead a team, negotiation skills, financial literacy, and building your leadership brand. We find these are skills not often or consistently offered by M&E companies. And yet they are essential to supporting emerging leaders.

“The reality for most M&E companies is those who reach a broad talent pool, provide ongoing upskilling, and retain emerging talent—they are the ones that will prosper”

For our members at all career phases, we also offer monthly tech and career upskilling webinars, in person networking, professional speaking and mentoring opportunities and beta-testing partnerships. But the biggest tool #GALSNGEAR provides

is a supportive community. In our digital world, feeling connected to others is a known factor in driving retention and profitability, as well as personal satisfaction.

Whatever may happen in the future with what we call “DEI”

the reality for most M&E companies is that those who reach a broad talent pool, provide ongoing upskilling, and retain emerging talent, as well as embrace strategies for nimble problem-solving—they are the ones that will prosper. ➡

Our the CONNECT Women's Leadership Summit at NAB Show in Las Vegas was a case in point (and yes, some men attended too—good for them!). The theme was “Resilience, Redefined”; and we explored this topic in a number of ways.

First, through the lens of an industry leader and diversity advocate with advanced degrees in both engineering and public policy. Michele Wright, PhD, Director of Business Development and Outreach at SMPTE, led us through her career twists and turns, her views on how change happens (slowly, but with purpose), and her belief that “the best is yet to come.”

Attendees also worked through a detailed process for creating their own personal financial wellness framework, led by Tacy Roby, CFP, Wealth Advisor with Tribridge Partners Financial. I definitely heard many “aha” moments from the floor during the hands-on workshop “Money Matters: Empower Your Financial Journey”.

LIFELONG LEARNERS

After some good old-fashioned networking, we ended the Summit with an inspiring and thoughtful panel on “Banishing Burnout, Building in Balance” moderated by Amanda Sapp, VP of Media & General Manager at Bread of Life/102.5FM. The group dove into the challenges of being in an “always on” society—and industry—and how they have worked to build balance into their busy lives.

They offered valuable advice for both experienced and early career attendees on how to extract yourself from negative situations, and put yourself forward for the career challenges you relish.

The panel included Michelle Oh, Co-Founder & General Manager of Roll.ai; Jin Soon Brancalhão, recent Senior Technical Marketing Manager at G&L Systemhaus, and Carla Prates, Product Management, Sales & Customer Support for Digital Anarchy. And they were proof that dynamic, life-long learners are contributing to the evolution of our industry.

Faced with global economic uncertainty paired with the constant change that is the norm in our technology-centric industry, what's next? No one knows for sure, but companies who embrace agile, diverse thinkers will drive past those stuck in old ideologies like homogeneity and group think. 🟡

Amy DeLouise runs a multi-platform digital storytelling company, is a frequent industry speaker, and is part of the leadership team of www.galsngear.tv





TNBFC ISN'T HERE TO CHANGE BLACK FILMMAKING, IT'S HERE TO CHANGE THE WHOLE INDUSTRY

The New Black Film Collective is a meeting point and incubator for black film talent in the UK. Its London XPO provided a week of talks and networking aimed at creating better industry—today

The UK film sector is not known as a place that fosters rapid upward mobility. Traditionally, the model is one of the gradual paying of dues and integrating into a larger community – slow and steady. The result has been an industry of supremely competent and professional craftspeople, but one which selects out difference. Overnight successes are frowned upon. Outsiders offering new paradigms are treated with skepticism.

The New Black Film Collective (TNBFC) was launched in 2013 in collaboration with a group of Black-led creative organisations in the UK, initially in response to the neglect of exhibition of Black-created film. The founders saw Black talent out in the marketplace, but it was not making it to mainstream screens. TNBFC set out to change that.

The power of community has been an essential pillar of TNBFC. The organization offers a membership service for Black-led film organisations and allies and offers networking, support, skills building, and raising awareness.

Premieres and screenings, accompanied by discussion, are a regular part of the calendar, often in partnership with industry organizations. In January, TNBFC and Film London came together to support the PictureEast Film Festival, celebrating the films and culture of East London. The festival was curated by local residents with the goal of reflecting the neighborhood's diversity, embracing the principle that variety is strength.





Photos courtesy of TNBFC

The group also offers creative services, including the management of PR campaigns for UK cinema and home entertainment releases of Black-created content, including *Nanny* (2022), *Queen & Slim* (2019), and *The Last Tree* (2019).

WELCOME TO THE XPO

But TNBFC's flagship event is its annual TNB XPO. Created to be a forum for countering how systemic racism has manifested itself in the film industry, the event attracts hundreds of moving image creatives to its program of workshops and discussions.

The in-person XPO is also accompanied by online events connecting to the international community, particularly in Africa and the Caribbean.

The XPO is designed to be a space of challenge as well as community. This year's session titles included "Killing the White Man: Revenge Cinema via Black Gaze", "House Negro vs. Field Negro" and "Screening with the Enemy". In addition to a raft of top industry talent, guest speakers included Prof. Kehinde Andrews, renowned academic and author of the Psychosis of Whiteness (also a documentary which analyzes film depictions of the

European slave trade). The XPO is working on generating change now, not next year or next decade, and takes the position that tiptoeing around issues is not going to enable that change that's required.

¡AU! partnered with TNB XPO this year. The partnership included the Collective providing speakers for our Emergency DEI Summit, which ran the same week as the XPO. At the XPO, ¡AU! founder Neal Romanek moderated a Q&A and discussion with writer Stella Oni on how creators should approach AI for businesses and creative work. ➤

¡AU! also interviewed Jasmine Bernard-Brooks, Project Coordinator at The New Black Film Collective, available on our YouTube channel.

"It's also a conversation not just about how the black and brown community is being interacted with in white spaces," said Bernard-Brooks, "but how we are within our own community, how we're talking to each other, how we're treating each other, how we see each other within the black creative space."

Expanding programming to include more tech themes new to this year's XPO, which embraced new digital tools, social content creation and gaming to an extent not seen in previous XPO's

"Our phones are now part of the screen industries and it would be amiss to not have that in the conversation."

INTRODUCING XPOSÉ

In March, TNBFC CEO and Founder Priscilla Igwe announced Xposé, an online publication for news, views and critical writing from The New Black Film Collective and its allies.

Igwe blogged a "Declaration of Independence," heralding the launch of the new brand:



"We have been commodified long enough so let's gather and become the solution to our own problems. Let's convene and put our hands in our own pockets so that we don't rely on handouts. Xposé will be a place for advice, opinion, opportunities, experiences and stories. Somewhere for critical writing, film reviews and where Black talent is celebrated."



WATCH: ¡AU!'s Neal Romanek interviews Jasmine Bernard-Brooks, Project Coordinator at The New Black Film Collective

The industry—and the world—finds itself at a turning point, where we can't keep doing what we've been doing and expect progress. What's ahead is a big unknown, but sometimes you just have to swallow your fear and jump.

"The industry is struggling and it is very serious for a lot of filmmakers and creatives trying to find jobs," Bernard-Brooks told us.

"I think there needs to be encouragement of people that a change of trajectory is okay. It doesn't mean you're failing as a creative. It just means that there are new avenues for you to go down for supporting yourself."

The New Black Film Collective will be an essential resource for the UK creative sector as things change in the coming decade. New voices, new talents and new decision-makers are what we badly need and TNBFC can help us find them. 🟡



WHITE SUPREMACY IS NOT A RIVER IN EGYPT

THE MEDIA INDUSTRY NEEDS TO WAKE UP & LET GO

Like it or not, it's a white supremacist world—and a white supremacist entertainment industry. What are you going to do about it?

Denial is not a river in Egypt,” goes the saying. White supremacy continues to be one of our society’s ongoing blind spots. But believe it or not, declaring that we live in a white supremacist world still shocks some people. It’s something we don’t like to think about, much less admit.

But stay calm, Brad. When we say “white supremacy,” all we mean is that systems are designed so those with European ancestry will always receive benefits and opportunities before other ethnicities. That’s all. It doesn’t mean “white people are better.” But it does mean “white people are *always* first in line.”

Fortunately, once we admit that white supremacy is a real thing—a force chugging along in the background of our everyday lives, all day, every day—we come to understand that it’s not a fact of nature.

It’s a choice.

And if it’s a choice, we can decide whether it’s something we want to keep doing, or not.

There are mountains of scholarship on racism. Prof. Keon West’s book *The Science Of Racism* is a great introduction to the scientific literature on how prejudice inhabits most of what we do, and how bad we are at our own prejudices. It’s a helpful guide in grounding conversations about racism in real world data.

BEYOND THE WHITE MIRROR

The media industry plays a role in white supremacy, traditionally affirming the status quo. But it has the power to transform culture too and be a platform for introducing new ideas—often in spite of itself.



Photos courtesy of Nappy

At the practical level, there are two main ethnicity-related issues that need to be addressed in the media sector:

1. How do we correct practices in hiring, decision-making and power-sharing, which have tended to exclude non-white people, and exclude ideas not constrained by a white supremacist paradigm?

2. How can we finance, distribute and celebrate storytelling and content from perspectives beyond the borders of white supremacy?

Diversity, equity and inclusion efforts have been adopted across the creative sectors in an attempt to break the back of some of these problems. Many of these were launched in the wake of George Floyd's murder by police in 2020 which brought rage at racist violence into mainstream American—ie, white—households. Corporate DEI programs were ramped up not just in the US, but globally.

When the new US president took office in January of this year, he made the dismantling of DEI programs a priority and began immediately threatening businesses who had made DEI a priority. Major media interests, including Disney, PBS, Paramount, and Warner

Bros. Discovery rolled back their DEI initiatives, to varying degrees, in order to appease the incoming administration. Some companies, like Disney, hedged their bets by making changes even before the election.

OLD PROBLEM, NEW SOLUTIONS

IAU's Emergency DEI Summit convened a discussion on the in-built racism in the media industry, how well DEI has worked, and what could come next.

Our speakers were filmmaker/producer and founder of Ikenga Creative Lab [Olu Adaeze](#), CBC Executive Director of Equity & Inclusion [Nick Davis](#), diversity consultant [Cyrice Griffith](#), and VP of Partnerships and Growth at Canada's Indigenous Screen Office, [Melanie Nepinak Hadley](#).

Our panelists were aware, through personal experience, that progress has been slow. While the attacks on DEI have been dramatic, it could be argued they are nothing new. The fact "DEI" is harder to say out loud, doesn't mean those efforts aren't still moving forward.

"This is not new, people opposing initiatives to support equity," said CBC's Nick Davis. "But we now have an acronym for it, and people ➡"





WATCH: Our Emergency DEI Summit panellists discuss the fight for representation in the media industry

hate the acronym, but it's not new at all. In 2002 CBC asked me how to get a more diverse audience for NHL hockey. All the ideas put out were pushed back on heavily by the people making hockey content, which was a room full off exclusively white men. They just thought it was crazy."

What is new now though, according to Davis, is that

agreed that the lack of restraint is today's defining characteristic:

"What's changed is that people have been given license to be overtly supremacist and divisionary, and we have given them that license without question. The global majority is not white male and rich, and yet the white, male and rich are

tied to economics. The precarity of life in the US, a country without much safety net and a population crippled by medical and student debt, makes it that much easier to use funding as a weapon. Losing your job in some countries may mean having to go on the dole. In the US it may mean having to live on the street.

"We have survived genocide. When we get shoved in our corner again, it's going to be different than it has been in the past"

Melanie Nepinak Hadley



people are more willing to be public about their opposition to diversity and inclusion.

"I think people have always felt that way, they just haven't expressed it publicly."

Cyrice Griffith, based in LA,

making outrageous decisions about what we can and cannot do."

The abandonment of DEI initiatives by companies and organizations—or even the stifling of individual discussion—is very much

"The DEI issue has become inextricably linked to financials," explained Griffith. "There is so much funding that is dependent on the government in the US. Schools and organizations are canceling programs because their funding is threatened if they don't."

Melanie Nepinak Hadley is an Ojibway woman who had long experience in development and production in Canadian TV before taking on a role at the Indigenous Screen Office. The ISO supports Indigenous

companies, groups, and individuals across screen platforms with funding and community. As some people are ramping up attacks on diversity, Hadley sees even stronger capabilities and resources for pushing back:

"The thing we have now is allyship across under-represented groups. That global majority is actually more connected now. In Canada, we have the Indigenous Screen Office. We also have the black screen office. We have the disability screen office. We have created our own spaces."

REIMAGINING ECOSYSTEMS

Filmmaker Olu Adaeze gave a perspective from the UK, recognizing that while there are some parallels with the North American industry, Britain has its own peculiarities when it came to equality.

"I think the issues here will unfold in a more subtle way," said Adaeze. "I always talk about racism in the UK as underneath the surface whereas in the US it's very overt. Here it could almost brush past your face and you don't notice."

"What has to change is how we respond. Over the years, the response has been bit 'kumbaya' for me. If people who are anti-DEI embed this into law, and are that strategic, and have these long term plans that they bolster with funding and resource, then we have to do the same. We have to do them ten better. We have to be a hundred steps ahead to counter that and reimagine what it looks like to not just

resist, but create ecosystems in which that noise and that kind of 'power' becomes obsolete."

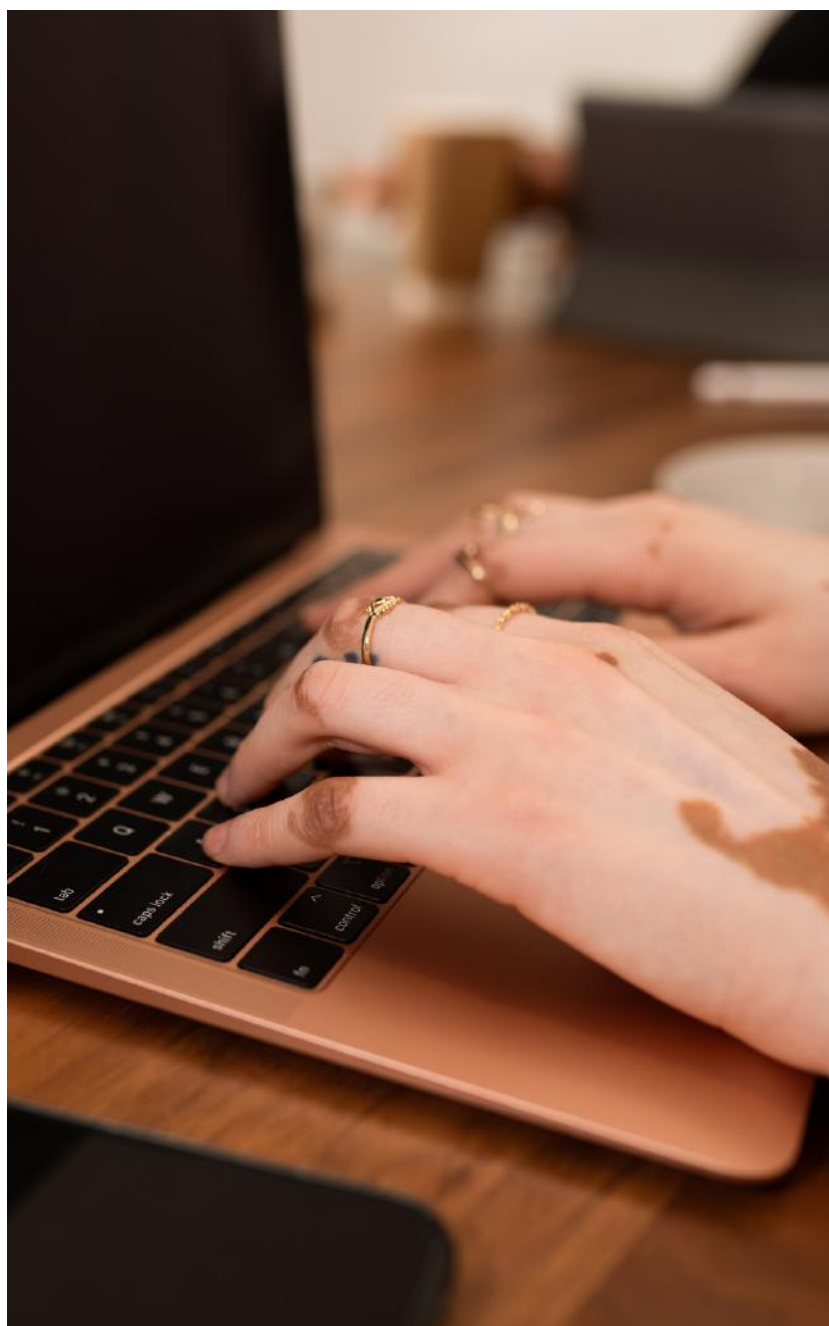
Though there may be difficult economic times ahead, Hadley sees the power of traditionally marginalized people kicking in to create something new and better.

"The industry contraction is going to be hard for people, and we're not going to see certain organizations

survive," explains Melanie Nepinak Hadley.

"But the one thing I'm holding on to is that we do have these lines out to the other underrepresented communities, and that is somewhat exciting, because we are resourceful people."

"We have survived genocide. When we get shoved in our corner again, it's going to be different than it has been in the past." ○



Rewriting the SCRIPT on streaming & media tech DIVERSITY

By Thomas Pearson, Global Director of People, Bitmovin

The tech side of the business still needs a push when it comes to embracing diversity long-term. New initiatives and leadership are helping to make progress.

The media industry has made notable strides in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) over the past few years, but there is still much work to be done. At the industry level, companies are under a variety of pressures from consumers, investors, and sometimes even regulators, to prioritize social responsibility, including DEI.

Embracing DEI is often seen not only as a moral imperative but also as a driver of business success. Companies that fail to do so risk reputational damage, talent loss, and reduced funding opportunities, not to mention that it has been demonstrated that businesses with a diverse makeup do better when it comes to the bottom line.

Thankfully, we are seeing more tangible opportunities for ensuring the health, progression and industry-wide focus of DEI, including a range of support resources and awareness strategies that can address and manage our need for DEI representation.

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN COMMITMENTS AND IMPACT

While industry-wide efforts are starting to flourish, with a range of important and

influential organizations keeping DEI in the spotlight, industry statistics are not reflecting this position. The question is, how can the media business encourage and foster a more inclusive environment for diverse individuals, and what needs to happen for this to be normalized on an industry-wide scale?

One of the challenges for DEI in the M&E industry is a lack of clearly measurable results. Organizations make public commitments to improve DEI, but with no strategies or processes in place, fail to act on it effectively, with actual progress often lagging behind promises.

Initiatives like WiSTech (Women in Streaming Technology) and DiSTech (Diversity in Streaming Technology) are examples of organizations who really are making a noticeable change in encouraging inclusivity in the media sector.

In just twelve months, WiSTech was able to achieve significant results by implementing gender competence workshops and encouraging inclusive hiring practices with company-wide focus on the female community. Similarly, the DiSTech project addresses the pressing issue of the under-

representation of women and other marginalized groups in streaming and technology, with a focus on embedding DEI as a core value. DiSTech also addresses intersectional DEI dimensions such as gender, race, LGBTQ+ inclusion and neurodiversity.

Another important consideration is the lack of representation for diverse individuals in engineering, product development, technical and leadership functions. It is clear that some progress has been made, but there is still a significant lack of representation for women and minorities in core and technical functions. Various studies show that the gender gap continues to be a critical issue, particularly in the streaming landscape and other high-growth sectors.

A WEALTH OF DIVERSE MEDIA TALENT

There are a myriad of strategies that we can adopt on an industry-wide level to encourage and foster diverse talent in the media sector. A good place to start is through hiring practices and implementing inclusive and diverse recruitment processes such as us gender-neutral job descriptions, diverse hiring panels, and targeted outreach programs aimed at getting in applications from underrepresented gender groups.

“Lasting progress in DEI isn’t achieved through statements – it’s built through everyday actions, thoughtful policies, and inclusive leadership”

Additional considerations include support resources such as workshops, development programs, and career development opportunities for teams in the media sector.

Annual broadcast trade shows like IBC and NAB provide valuable platforms for the industry, and continue to educate the sector on the ongoing gaps in inclusivity, and the media tech sector continues to offer events and training.

Recently, a public discussion with Carrie Wooten, co-founder of Rise and the Global Media & Entertainment Talent Manifesto, highlighted practical tips for managers on

supporting neurodivergent people in the workplace, and International Women’s Day was celebrated in London with an afternoon tea event.

In July a Women in Streaming Innovation panel featured top industry leaders from organizations such as the BBC, Deluxe Media, and Media Careers.

These initiatives demonstrate just a few practical ways the sector can continue to integrate DEI through consistent, community-driven engagement.

The importance of encouraging, supporting and developing diverse talent cannot be overstated. DEI is not just a moral imperative, it is a strategic advantage that fosters creativity, innovation, and resilience. When competing business priorities and economic pressures arise, companies can be tempted to scale back DEI-related investments. To ensure DEI remains a top priority, it’s crucial for executives to maintain consistent buy-in, and even seek external support from DEI consultants, to stay on track.

Lasting progress in DEI isn’t achieved through statements – it’s built through everyday actions, thoughtful policies, and inclusive leadership. There’s still significant room for growth in ensuring broader representation and diversity at all levels.

While progress has been made, many companies, especially in the media industry still have a long way to go. We must continue creating inclusive environments and tackling systemic inequalities at every level. 🟡

Photo by Matias Mango

HOW TO RISE WHEN YOU'RE BELOW THE LINE: ACCESSING POWER BEHIND THE CAMERA

Craft and tech roles don't always make the front page, but they're the jobs that keep our industry functioning. How do we ensure everyone gets a chance to contribute?

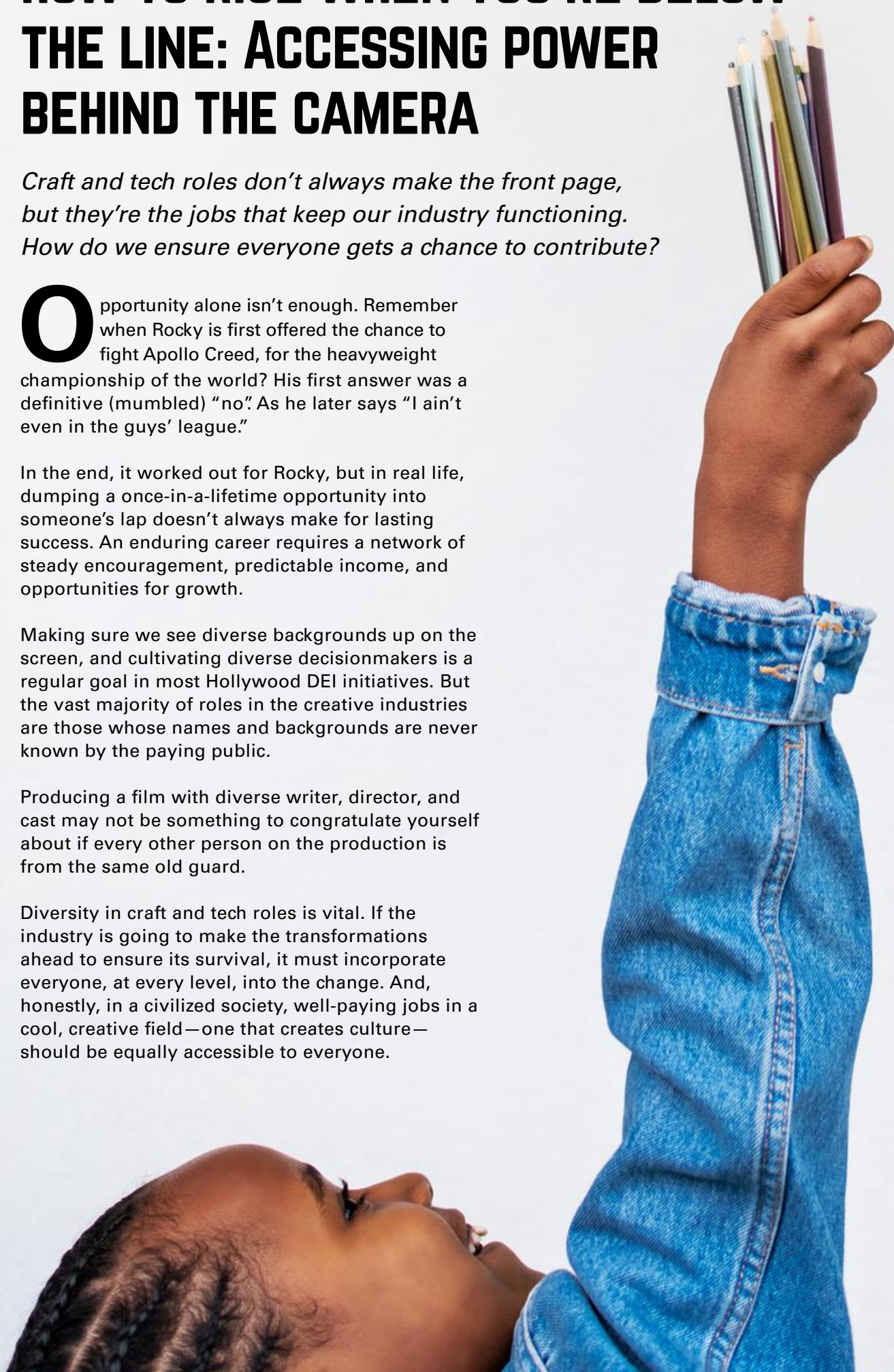
Oppportunity alone isn't enough. Remember when Rocky is first offered the chance to fight Apollo Creed, for the heavyweight championship of the world? His first answer was a definitive (mumbled) "no". As he later says "I ain't even in the guys' league."

In the end, it worked out for Rocky, but in real life, dumping a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity into someone's lap doesn't always make for lasting success. An enduring career requires a network of steady encouragement, predictable income, and opportunities for growth.

Making sure we see diverse backgrounds up on the screen, and cultivating diverse decisionmakers is a regular goal in most Hollywood DEI initiatives. But the vast majority of roles in the creative industries are those whose names and backgrounds are never known by the paying public.

Producing a film with diverse writer, director, and cast may not be something to congratulate yourself about if every other person on the production is from the same old guard.

Diversity in craft and tech roles is vital. If the industry is going to make the transformations ahead to ensure its survival, it must incorporate everyone, at every level, into the change. And, honestly, in a civilized society, well-paying jobs in a cool, creative field—one that creates culture—should be equally accessible to everyone.





WATCH: Our Summit panellists talk strategies for getting skills and training to the people who need it most

STAY FOR THE IMPACT

LAU's Emergency DEI Summit panel "How to rise when you're below the line" looked at how to get new talent into technology and craft jobs, and to offer them training and encouragement for developing a long-lasting media industry career.

Panelists were Simon Devereux, who heads up Access VFX, a charity helps young people from all backgrounds into the animation and effects sector, Amanda Sapp, VP of media at Bread Of Life, which helps resource-challenged people in Houston, and General Manager of community-supported radio station KMAZ 102.5, and Ellen Walker, head of RightsTech Women, a Geneva-based nonprofit offering technology and human rights training for girls and women.

The discussion underlined the fact that there isn't a lack of talent for the industry to draw on. What there is however is a lack of access for talent that already exists.

"Come for the music, stay for the impact" is the slogan of LPFM radio station KMAZ 102.5, supported by Houston's Bread Of Life charity, that serves Downtown Houston.

"At Bread of Life, we work with organizations like Workforce Solutions that allow us to hire young adults, ages 16 to 24, who are disengaged," explained Amanda Sapp.

"In Texas, there are 177,000 young adults who are disengaged. We know that there is a talent pool that are tech savvy, that are online, and doing all of these amazing things they've already learned on the internet."

Bread of Life has a deep and practical understanding of impact. The organization serves vulnerable people around 500 meals a day and supports 3000 people a month with its food distribution programs. Their media arm is also directly supports the community, broadcasting directly to the local area.

"We understand the target audience that we have at Bread of Life, and we find the training to help them learn, not only what they can do through our mentorship, but also connecting the dots with other people in the industry."

DIVERSE TALENT FOR DIVERSE ROLES

Access VFX was started in 2017 specifically to get talent from diverse backgrounds into visual effects roles. ➡

"It was a direct reaction to the reality that the industry was run by geeky white boys who like explosions and Marvel movies," said Devereux.

"We've been trying to change the rhetoric around that and the population of the industry. We're in the business of storytelling, and storytelling comes from all walks of life."

Given that effects-driven tentpole movies are a staple of global cinema, there is a surprising lack of education

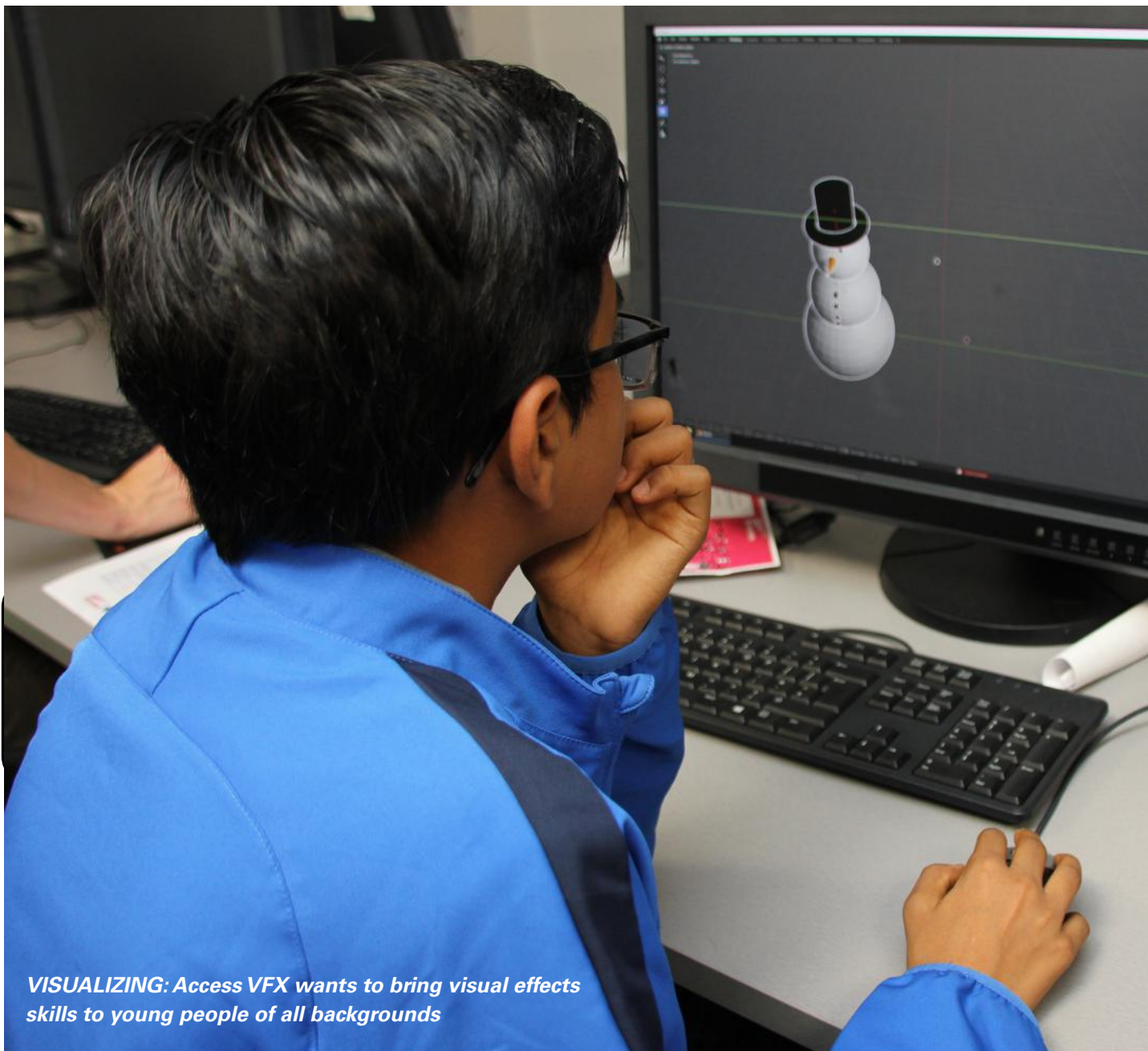
about what the VFX industry really does.

"VFX isn't part of the common vernacular in schools and colleges," said Devereux. "What we do with Access VFX is create that awareness. Within the equity, diversity, inclusion space, there is a lot of talk and not a huge amount of actually doing the work. Anything we do has to have an output. There has to be something we're actually doing. One thing we've always done

is to spotlight careers through our outreach efforts.

"There are a lot of courses that have a high proportion of 'diverse' students but that doesn't always translate to the industry itself"

Access VFX has an intensive e-mentoring program that connects newcomers to the industry with VFX professionals globally in roles from marketing, HR, and finance, to animation and creative direction.



VISUALIZING: Access VFX wants to bring visual effects skills to young people of all backgrounds

YOU HAVE A HUMAN RIGHT TO TRAINING

Ellen Walker is a human rights lawyer by background. As founder of RightsTech Women, she brings training and education to women and girls around technology, but also places it within a human rights framework.

“The language we use around this subject changes over the years,” explained Walker. “But one common thread that goes on beneath it is human rights. Human rights have a vocabulary that can be helpful and also tools that can help you stand up for, protect, and advance those rights—and not just let them stay where they are.”

Walker addressed the whether the principle of equity—trying to provide access for specific groups, rather than assuming a level playing field—really are just. The current United States government asserts DEI programs are actively hostile and detrimental to equal access. Is the government right? Is DEI practice fundamentally unfair?

“Under international human rights law, it is actually required,” explained Walker. “After World War II, people were trying to prevent atrocities. Governments got together, and they wrote human rights into human rights treaties. Included in them was that you have to take proactive measures to address historical discrimination.”

Walker’s presentation was a reminder that waiting for the law to rule in your favor, or



Photo by Christina Morillo

hoping someone will throw you a bone, should not be a normal state of affairs. Human rights exist *a priori* to business practices or to laws.

“Everybody has them. It’s not a favor, and governments must deliver them.”

Among those rights is a right to education—which encompasses the right to professional training.

“You have got the right to education, which includes tech skills. There is also a human right to human rights education itself.”

“It’s a question of who are you serving,” said Bread of Life’s Amanda Sapp. “What population are you serving and do you want to serve them well? Part of that is training, which I get to do with our young adults here.

“If we’re open to becoming mentors for people, that gives us an opportunity to not have to consider all the different acronyms that are out today, what words and policies that are being set out for us. I feel like as leaders, we have that responsibility to control the narrative.” 🟡

“Within the equity, diversity, inclusion space, there is a lot of talk and not a huge amount of actually doing the work”

Simon Devereux



Businesses themselves can be a prime driver of this education, making training and empowerment part of the service they provide. Responsibility rather than reactivity is where progress is most likely to happen.



NEXT ISSUE

August 2025

Is your content worthless?

How do you know?

**In a world of AI-charged pirates,
hackers & deep fakers ...**

... no IP is safe.

**Content authenticity,
IP piracy, and the Gen AI threat**

Can copyright
survive the Gen
AI bubble?

Content piracy:
Big tech & big
money

Protecting
(& monetizing)
your likeness

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