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ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

2138 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6216

(202) 225-3951

<http://www.house.gov/judiciary>

February 3, 2016

Cheryl Boone Isaacs  
President  
Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences  
8949 Wilshire Boulevard  
Beverly Hills, California 90211

Dear Ms. Boone Isaacs:

We write to follow up on your recent statements promising to use the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences ("the Academy") to strengthen diversity in the motion picture industry. As the Ranking Members of the House Committee on the Judiciary and the Regulatory Reform, Commercial, and Antitrust Law Subcommittee, we have been long-time champions of inclusion in the entertainment industry, and we believe the Academy can play a crucial role in promoting and recognizing diverse voices throughout Hollywood.

Every year the Academy Awards recognize those who have achieved excellence in the film industry. These prestigious honors are an important measure of progress for the industry, revealing the voices it values – and by implication those it does not. We share in your disappointment that for the second year running, there are no African American nominees in any major category. The recent announcement that some of Hollywood's biggest stars will boycott the 2016 Academy Awards tells us that the time to confront this issue is now.

African Americans are one of the largest movie going audiences. According to the Motion Picture Association of America's Theatrical Market Statistics, while African Americans comprised almost 25% of the audience for 2014's top grossing films, less than five percent of the Academy is African American. With a current buying power of \$1 trillion that is forecast to reach \$1.3 trillion by the end of 2017, it would seem more important than ever for the industry to connect with African American consumers. Surely more audiences would be drawn to films that are more reflective of the heterogeneous nature of the audience.

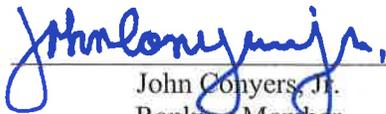
African Americans have long played a role in the motion picture industry, highlighted by the Academy's early recognition of Hattie McDaniel and Sydney Poitier. Though the talents of African Americans have been recognized throughout the Academy's history, overall progress in the entertainment industry – like many other industries – has been uneven and mirrors our society's struggle for diversity. We therefore believe a continuing failure to recognize such an important segment of the population by the industry in general and the Academy in particular may have a negative effect on competition and diversity in this critical market place.

Letter to Ms. Cheryl Boone Isaacs

Your recently announced plan to increase diversity within the Academy should be seen as a first step toward a broader plan to increase diversity in Hollywood as a whole; however, we hope to ensure that this is not a false step. The motion picture industry has long been a crucial ally in the fight for justice, telling the stories that help us to see one another in a different light. We believe Hollywood should be on the leading edge of inclusion, and the Academy, by recognizing excellence from all viewpoints, can help achieve that goal.

As you pursue the Academy's 2020 goals, we would like to invite you to meet with us and our colleagues to continue this dialogue at your earliest convenience. We look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



John Conyers, Jr.  
Ranking Member  
House Judiciary Committee



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Regulatory Reform,  
Commercial, and Antitrust Law

cc: Bob Goodlatte, Chairman, House Judiciary Committee