

The Diversity In Entertainment Foundation

Over the past several decades, entertainment has taken over a significant portion of our lives. While there is the problem of this forcing us to embrace a more sedentary lifestyle, that is not what I will be talking about today. The theme of this essay is diversity, equity, and inclusion, and I've read enough books and watched enough movies to know that, although diversity has improved recently, more engagement and education are still needed. Too many books star protagonists from a single race or type of person when there is no need for it, showing that there is still insufficient equity in inclusion. Diversity is hindered by preconceived notions that adding diversity to artwork results in losing the interest of the intended audiences, even though looking at box office charts proves that movies with different types of leads have the same success rates overall. The entertainment industry still isn't willing to integrate representation, even though there is some value in increasing representation since it reaches a larger number of people's interests and tastes. Also, even when they try to incorporate representation, oftentimes actors from an over-represented race play stereotypical, unreal, and, at times, offensive representations of minorities, which isn't much better. This needs to change.

That is why I wish to start the Diversity in Entertainment Initiative, with the purpose of:

- helping aspiring authors and filmmakers write and make their artwork while learning the importance of diversity
- Connecting artists to diverse community groups to help broaden their audience base
- assisting them in adding to their masterpieces.

- helping promote these people's projects via social media, and helping promote the idea and core of the foundation, which will not only help the recognition of these artists but will also help increase diversity, equity, and inclusion

My foundation needs to focus on this because diversity and inclusion lead to equity among majorities and minorities alike, which will help strengthen the community, a cause that will benefit everyone. Entertainment can give more unheard minorities the voice they deserve. Furthermore, communities that might not usually get spotlighted will finally be recognized, which might help them be accepted. The clearest example is the LGBTQ+ community, which, although has gained popularity in the last couple of years, is still not fully accepted, and has often been shown hate and violence. My project can help spread awareness and understanding of the true values of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as any other community that needs to be more widely spread. As another example of a stereotypicalized community, I have seen a lot of Indians being portrayed very stereotypically in media, oftentimes having a very fake "Indian" accent and owning a reptilian pet. On top of that, they are often "race washed," meaning non-Indians playing Indian people's roles, or any person not of a specific culture playing a character from that culture. One example of Indian "white-washing" lies in the movie *Gandhi*, focused around one of the most well-known Indians in the world. The movie was stellar, but the lead was played by Ben Kingsley, who, although a phenomenal actor, was born and raised in England. In a behind-the-scenes interview, it was also revealed that the actor actually wore makeup to make his skin look darker. I can ensure that race-washing or stereotypicalizing does not occur with my project. This is not the only benefit, as more diverse content can appeal to a wider range of tastes and preferences, boosting the amount of money made on these forms of entertainment.

Other individuals have done something similar to my idea and have inspired me, such as the authors of *Once & Future*, Cori McCarthy and Amy Rose Capetta, who co-founded the Rainbow Boxes initiative and sent boxes of fiction stories featuring the Pride community to homes in all fifty states as well as founding Rainbow Writers Workshop, which strives to help LGPTQIAP+ authors publish their books. Another example is the EIF Careers Program, which helps minority actors find jobs.

In conclusion, I will create the Diversity in Entertainment Initiative to help educate and promote diversity, inclusion, and equity in the entertainment industry, with the goal of helping our community grow and make the world a better place.

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