

# AIFTV

## **American Indians in Film and television**

9354 Hillrose Street, Shadow Hills, Calif. 91040

(818) 353-8777 (818)378-4370

E-mail; [triplep.ranch@verizon.net](mailto:triplep.ranch@verizon.net)

December 1, 2005

Statement by: Mark S. Reed

Good morning ladies and gentlemen.

### [THE INVISIBLE AMERICAN---THE AMERICAN INDIAN](#)

Anglo's have exploited American Indians for over Six Hundred years. The American Indian has been an American citizen for just over One Hundred years. Until the US Government exploited the American Indian in WWII most didn't even know they were American citizens.

In the first films made American Indians were portrayed as savages killing European settlers. For the next century this image remained the same, until it changed to the defeated, drunken, noble savage. Today, the American Indian is invisible in prime time television, only to be seen when Hollywood decides to exploit the American Indian culture with little regard to accuracy.

The American Indian influence can be found in every part of America today. Indians can be found in our U S Government, local government, law enforcement, health care and our military. Because of undercounts and other census quirks the total number of Indians in the United States today may be close to fifteen or even thirty million, Jack D. Forbes argues, an emeritus professor of American Indian studies at the University of Calif. at Davis. Using the 2000 census data, Indians can be called America's fastest-growing minority.

The entire community, Indian and non-Indian have to ask the question: Why is the American Indian Invisible? The question then needs to be taken to the industry, asked and answered. Through the years the industry has created a negative stereo-type image of the American Indian. It will take the pro-active involvement of the industry to reverse the damage they created. It will also take the constant voice of the community to reverse the American Indian image. The community should boycott the network with the least improvement of the American Indian Image.

The recent Screen Actors Guild casting data report reported a loss of 48 roles for American Indians. In the press release the Guild failed to release all the facts about the unemployment of American Indians. Approximately forty one thousand roles were cast and American Indians filled just over one hundred of them. In prime time television the American Indian is almost invisible. The Screen Actors Guild represents about fifteen hundred actors who happen to be American Indian. The way the Guild reports the unemployment of American Indians only exacerbates their problem.

The American Indian actor now suffers from romantic discrimination and exploitation in today's media. The image of the American Indian needs to evolve into the twenty-first century. Contemporary roles need to be open to actors who happen to be American Indian. In order for this to happen, the image of leather and feathers need to be put aside.

This image overhaul will take a real commitment by the industry. Each of the unions will need to create an outreach program to organize all American Indian talent. The unions will need to unify in their commitment to involve the American Indian. The greatest change in the entertainment industry will be in the way in which talent (actors, writers, directors, producers) who happen to be American Indians are hired. The studios and networks need to unify in their commitment to effect change.

If we graded the networks on employment of American Indians, we would be forced to give them a failing grade, an F. With our involvement the networks are beginning to take a unique approach to the problems that American Indians face in television. 'Diversity-by-Design not Diversity-on-Demand.' We expect this relationship to continue to grow in the years to come.

The romantic discrimination and exploitation of the America Indian needs to stop. This may be the greatest challenge of the twenty-first century for our media giants. The American Indian is involved in every part of the American society except for media. The time for inclusion of the American Indian voice in American media is now.

Thank you.

