

Media

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California Vision Statement

CAWA connects through a network of 19 county or regional coalitions with volunteer coordinators. There are over 600 organizations within these networks - from small single-issue groups to chapters of large national and international organizations - collectively reaching a base constituency of over one million women and girls. The network is further enlarged by other human rights and social justice coalitions with which CAWA is affiliated. County coalitions use the 1996 CAWA Plan of Action (updated in 2000 and 2005) as their framework for action on critical concerns and policy issues. Men who support our goals are welcome and active in the CAWA network.

Since California leads the nation in news media, arts and film and includes some of the most prestigious institutions and organizations for ensuring women are fairly and accurately represented in the media it is our vision to continue to create ways to increase not only the positive representation of women in the media, but also to increase the involvement of women in news reporting and media professions.

Achievements

Unfortunately, no major accomplishments have happened in the last five years over this critical area of concern. Key originations in the state of California are working towards changing the stereotypes and gender bias in the media, but this is not easy task and will take time.

Obstacles Encountered

There are many obstacles identified regarding the representation and presence of women in the media. This extends to women in film and television in addition to women in journalism and media professions. Among the most prevalent issues for women in film and television are the way female characters are portrayed, the types of roles available to women in film and the lack of women employed as film directors, studio heads or producers.

This appears to be the same case for women in journalism professions where men dominate lead editor and producer roles in both newspaper and broadcast journalism. Women are often given “lighter” stories to cover such as fashion, entertainment, beauty or home and family oriented topics. Women’s journalistic voices are absent from coverage of world events and politics.

Issues of Concern

Several critical issues of concern regarding women in the media are represented in a 2012 report from the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in the Media and in a 2014 report from the Women’s Media Center. Beginning with female characters represented in film and television, here are statistics presented by the Geena Davis Institute for Gender in the Media:

- Males outnumber females 3 to 1 in family films. In contrast, females comprise just over 50% of the population in the United States. Even more staggering is the fact that this ratio, as seen in family films, is the same as it was in 1946.
- Females are almost four times as likely as males to be shown in sexy attire. Further, females are nearly twice as likely as males to be shown with a diminutive waistline. Generally unrealistic figures are more likely to be seen on females than males.
- Females are also underrepresented behind the camera. Across 1,565 content creators, only 7% of directors, 13% of writers, and 20% of producers are female. This translates to 4.8 males working behind-the-scenes to every one female.

- From 2006 to 2009, not one female character was depicted in G-rated family films in the field of medical science, as a business leader, in law, or politics. In these films, 80.5% of all working characters are male and 19.5% are female, which is a contrast to real world statistics, where women comprise 50% of the workforce.

California currently leads the United States in the number of media positions and the number of media outlets owned by women. A 2004 survey by the women's media center revealed that women made up only 37 % of newspaper staff, 34 % of supervisors or lead editors and women of color a staggering 6 %. Nearly seven years later in a 2013 follow up survey, only 17 women from media and tech companies made Fortune Magazine's "Most Powerful Women" list. As newspapers gradually eliminate staff, women's media jobs are being eliminated. The Op – Ed Project reports that men write the majority of newspaper Op Eds as only 17 % are written by women and are often on the topic of gender and not about more signifying subjects such as politics, national budgets or other pressing societal issues. Girls as young as age 6 are starting to see themselves as sex objects based on media influences. Only 7% of directors, 13% of writers, and 20% of producers are female. With such a dearth of female representation in front of and behind the camera, it's a struggle to champion female stories and voices.

The media is the single most powerful tool at our disposal; it has the power to educate, effect social change, and determine the political policies and elections that shape our lives. Our work in diversifying the media landscape is critical to the health of our culture and democracy. According to Women's Media Center:

- By a nearly 3 to 1 margin, male front-page bylines at top newspapers outnumbered female bylines in coverage of the 2012 presidential election. Men were also far more likely to be quoted than women in newspapers, television and public radio.
- On Sunday TV talk shows, women comprised only 14 percent of those interviewed and 29 percent of roundtable guests.
- Talk radio and sports talk radio hosts are overwhelmingly male.

- As newspaper employment continues to tumble, so does the number of women in key jobs.
- Newer, online-only news sites have fallen into the same rut as legacy media. Male bylines outnumbered female bylines at four of six sites reviewed.
- The percentage of women who are television news directors edged up, reaching 30 percent for the first time. Overall employment of women in TV news remains flat.
- Obituaries about men far outnumber those of women in top national and regional newspapers.
- Women comprised just 9 percent of the directors of the top 250 domestic grossing films of 2013.
- Women comprised 39 percent of documentary directors whose work appeared at major festivals in 2012-13.
- Across all behind-the-camera positions, females were most likely to be producers. However, as the prestige of the producing post increased, the percentage of female participation decreased.
- Forty-seven percent of gamers are women, but 88 percent of video games developers are male

Action Plan/ Solutions

1. Increase the amount of media training available to women and girls beginning in primary schools.
 2. Encourage women to study media, film and journalism by making university opportunities more tangible and available, especially for women of color.
 3. Produce more studies on sexism in the media in order to call attention to the ongoing gender bias.
 4. Increase the conversation on women in the media on social media outlets. A good example of this is the #sheparty conversation on Twitter-created by the Women's Media Center.
1. Recommendations for Action

2. Increase the number of newspaper articles and Op Eds written by women.
3. Creating partnerships among the major California advocacy networks for the representation of women in the media such as Women's Media Center, Genna Davia Institute for Gender in the Media, Ms. Magazine and Feminist Majority Foundation.

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