

3/23/2016

## Recommendations to SAG-AFTRA Women's committee

Hi Leslie,

I was asked by the executives of the Women's Committee when I attended your meeting in February to submit an action list for your consideration, which I include here. I would love to discuss some solutions to issues facing female performers and had hoped to have that opportunity when I attended the recent meeting. I regret that the call to action I submitted did not meet with a more favorable response and that we were unable to discuss the issues currently facing our members and possible solutions that would to move us forward as a Union and an Industry.

I had originally received an e-mail from you on May 28, 2015 inviting me to attend a meeting of the women's committee and consider membership:

"As Adam Moore may have explained - there are many protocols for committee service in our union,... and you have taken the first step! I will ask Adam, and Becky Curran to add your name as official observers at our next meeting, so you can see how we operate, and assess if this committee service is something you'd like to pursue further.

Our next meeting most likely won't be scheduled until the late summer, or early fall. You will be invited to join us."

You mentioned that you and President Hodge think that my colleagues and I are naïve. No doubt there is a great deal of history on the work the Women's Committee has done on behalf of women in our profession before I became a member 13 years ago. I had hoped to be enlightened to that history and the current activities and objectives of the women's committee as well as its policies and procedures by observing the committee and had thought that this might help me be of better service to the committee and my colleagues. Perhaps it would help us seem less naïve. It would of course be most helpful if this information were available and accessible to all members. It seems self-evident that it naturally should be and is all the more surprising that after multiple, deep inquiries and meeting with leaders of the committee, I still don't have any clarity. We have been told that the Women's committee is the faction appointed to address women's issues and interests. We would still very much like to know what and how the committee is doing for women.

We have many ideas on how the Union could better serve and protect our female members and I appreciate the opportunity to submit them, though these points would naturally be better served by discussion. As an outsider I can only speculate on what the Union may be capable of doing. My understanding of the Women's Committee is limited to our meeting in February. I am pleased to offer what suggestions I can make with that understanding.

The committee might consider the following actions to enhance its ability to promote women's gender equality issues in the industry:

- Commit itself to *inclusion* of its female members and their interests. It should be a *right for any* member to attend and observe a meeting of the committee that represents them and stands as their advocate.
- Ensure that the membership guidelines are established with clarity, consistency and diplomacy and make those guidelines public to membership.
- Make a greater effort to reach the vast community of SAG-AFTRA's female membership with active mailing lists and updated web page with resources and events.
- Endeavor to have the committee's executives represent the diversity of the union's female membership.
- Coordinate public panels and discussions on how women can portray female roles while responsibly addressing negative stereotypes and objectification.
- Conduct a study into the conditions facing our female performers. I have ideas about how to most effectively conduct that study to get a greater picture of working conditions and employment opportunities. I am connected with data scientists at MIT that may be interested in supporting such a study if the union and the women's committee would like to pursue it. A primary response of any organization when facing issues of harassment and assault is to take a climate test and survey the depth and breadth of the issue.
- Consider sponsoring regular screening of films by members that feature female protagonists to showcase the strength of such projects.
- Make efforts to facilitate the growth of a supportive community for female performers that could help individuals navigate aspects of the industry that are more hostile to women. This community could have safe, anonymous spaces online to discuss the abuses and obstacles they encounter.
- Make a commitment to the principle that Committee members should be selected based on interest and advocacy. There was a great deal of time at our meeting spent discussing my resume. We would like to know that a woman's qualification for service on the Women's Committee begins with her membership in the union and her active interest in supporting and advocating for female members. The committee would be well served by finding women who are *actively* interested in improving women's opportunities and working conditions.
- As we began to discuss some of the issues at the meeting I attended so that we could consider constructive actions to take in response, the resounding response at the table was "We know! We're *tired* of talking about it. We've been talking about it for *thirty years*." I understand and respect that the members of the

executive committee have been addressing this issue for many years and we owe a debt of gratitude to each of you and every woman that has not only given voice to these concerns, but those that have endured limited opportunities and unjust working conditions with strength and resilience. I would assert however, that continued discussion is necessary to continue to understand the current issues and how to best address them. There must be room for that conversation.

- Interest must be taken in the issues that currently face performers today, especially those that may vary in age/demographic from the executive committee. The experience of the members I have spoken with is that they neither feel safe or comfortable indicting discrimination or harassment in the workplace, nor have they felt that the Union currently provides adequate support. Some of the committee stated that this was not their personal experience. Perhaps the committee could be served by listening to the experiences of other women in the union.
- When deciding how to answer today's gender equality issues, it's not clear that the committee has considered the graphically sexualized marketplace that exists today and how it may differ from previous decades and may put members at greater risk of exploitation, harassment and assault.

As stated we have many ideas about ways that the union can advocate for its members and how it can make our working environment safer for women. There seem to be some clear policy adjustments that could be made, including those regarding nudity. There should be greater resources and outreach for those experiencing harassment or assault in the workplace. There seems to be room to provide greater support for maternity and family leave and to promote gender diversity in casting. Could we discuss these issues further?

There are many organizations in the state and country that work to protect worker's rights, women's rights and human rights, but we had hoped the Union would stand as our first line of defense and greatest advocate. It is a shame to miss an opportunity to lead as the industry moves toward equality.

Thank you for taking a few moments to hear from us. My personal thanks for your regard and compassion. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss these issues further.

M.Hampton