

Ken Howard Remarks, at his First official Guild “Event”

President’s National Task Force for American Indians member Caucus – September 28, 2009

GOOD EVENING AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR WARM WELCOME.

THANK YOU ALSO TO TASK FORCE CHAIR, DELANA STUDI, SCREEN ACTORS GUILD, INTERIM NATIONAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DAVID WHITE AND NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION/DIVERSITY REBECCA YEE FOR THEIR EFFORTS IN ORGANIZING THIS EVENT.

As you may know, I recently won an election.

Yes, this is my first official member event as President of Screen Actors Guild and it’s a real privilege to be here.

I can’t tell you how honored I am to have been chosen by the membership to lead the Screen Actors Guild.

I campaigned on the promise that I’d do everything in my power to strengthen our position at the bargaining table by building greater unity within SAG and among the other entertainment industry unions—and by creating even more opportunities for all SAG Members.

This is a priority because SAG can’t reach out effectively or stand strong in negotiations with our employers, if we aren’t united within our own ranks. We can’t build opportunity if we aren’t working together.

As I speak with you tonight, it’s clear to me that we are striving for the same things – unity, common interest and common effort toward a fair and truly diverse workplace and greater opportunities for American Indian Actors.

I want you to know that I am committed to the Task Force mandates of:

- Increasing employment opportunities for American Indians by expanding the range of character portrayals and eliminating negative stereotypes;
- Recommending and implementing projects and programs to raise the industry’s level of awareness regarding American Indian Culture;
- Recommending and implementing outreach programs that educate, empower and organize Indian Country and particularly American Indian youth within the entertainment industry;
- Unifying our sister guilds and industry professionals to establish policies that promote accurate depictions of contemporary American Indian characters on screen;
- Creating equitable levels of compensation, benefits and working conditions for American Indian performers;
- and, recognizing the exclusive and unique relationship that American Indians have with the United States Government through the Constitution of the United States.

We all know that the media does not accurately reflect the full range of the American Scene.

And we all know that we have not reached our goals in terms of diverse portrayals or diverse casting, but by being here tonight and by being active on the President’s Task Force – I believe we lay the groundwork for greater improvements in the future.

Access. Inclusion. Accuracy. Equality. These are goals we're passionate about achieving, and to do so we need to continually remind ourselves that together we are much more than the sum of our parts – together we are a powerful force for change.

By pulling together, we can achieve a greater awareness and commitment to fair employment practices on the part of industry decision makers.

And, ultimately, we will see expanded casting and hiring of American Indian performers in film, television and commercials.

Working together it will happen.

Thank you all for your courage and commitment on behalf of American Indian actors, and for your efforts to help promote diverse casting and portrayals.

The Guild needs your activism and involvement.

I thank you for the honor of addressing your caucus.