
Black artists call on Hollywood to prove Black Lives Matter

By: Reuters

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More than 300 Black actors and filmmakers, including Idris Elba, Queen Latifah and Billy Porter, on Tuesday asked Hollywood to divest in the police and invest in anti-racist content.

An open letter addressed to “Our Allies in Hollywood” attacked what it called the industry’s “legacy of white supremacy” and said Hollywood “encourages the epidemic of police violence and culture of anti-Blackness.”

The letter, organized by the group Hollywood 4 Black Lives, was written in the midst of a cultural and political reckoning in the United States about systemic racism and mass protests about the killing of Black people by police.

Specific demands included abolishing the employment of police officers on sets and putting pressure on Los Angeles city authorities to reduce budgets for policing.

It called on the movie and television industry to “end the intentional glorification of police brutality and corruption in our storytelling” and for studios to employ more Black people with executive, budget and green lighting powers.

Long-running police TV shows “Live PD” and “Cops” were canceled earlier this month. Multiple celebrities, including talk show hosts Jimmy Kimmel and Jimmy Fallon, and “30 Rock” creator Tina Fey have issued public apologies for wearing black face or depicting white characters made up as Black people.

“It is time for Hollywood to acknowledge its role and take on the responsibility of repairing the damage and being a proactive part of the change,” Tuesday’s letter said.

According to a report on diversity in Hollywood published in February by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), people of color took 27.6% of lead roles in top films for 2019, almost triple the percentage in 2011.

Heads of movie studios were 91% white and 82% male, according to the UCLA report.

Signatories to Tuesday's letter included campaign groups Black Lives Matter and Color of Change, as well as actors Viola Davis, Tiffany Haddish, Janelle Monae, Mahershala Ali, Laverne Cox, Cynthia Erivo and "Black Panther" star Chadwick Boseman.
