

WHERE WE ARE ON TV: GLAAD's 11TH ANNUAL STUDY EXAMINES DIVERSITY OF THE 2006-2007 PRIMETIME TELEVISION SEASON

LANDMARK YEAR OF VISIBILITY, YET LGBT TELEVISION CHARACTERS REPRESENT ONLY 1.3% OF BROADCAST NETWORK LANDSCAPE

AUGUST 21, 2006 – After a landmark year of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) representation in films such as *Brokeback Mountain*, *Capote* and *Transamerica*, the broadcast television networks continue to underrepresent their LGBT audience, according to an analysis conducted by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), the nation's LGBT media advocacy group. The number of LGBT scripted representations on the six major broadcast networks will comprise only 1.3% of all series regular characters on the networks' 2006-07 schedule.

"In the last year, we've seen a tremendous amount of visibility on the big screen, reaching a large audience anxious to see our stories," says GLAAD President Neil G. Giuliano. "The networks, though, are not tapping into this audience and are failing to represent the reality and the diversity of their viewers and the world around them."

GLAAD analyzed the 95 announced primetime comedies and dramas on the broadcast networks: ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, The CW and MyNetworkTV. Out of a total 679 series regular lead or supporting characters, GLAAD counts only nine (9) gay or lesbian characters — 1.3% — appearing on eight (8) different scripted network programs. There are an additional five (5) semi-regular recurring characters announced for this year. There are currently no bisexual or transgender representations on the broadcast networks.

One year ago, at the launch of the 2005-06 season, GLAAD counted 10 lesbian, gay and bisexual series regulars (representing 1.4% of all characters) with an additional six lesbian, gay and bisexual recurring characters.

While the year-to-year numbers are relatively consistent, the profile of the roles has been greatly reduced. CBS' *The Class* and The CW's *Hidden Palms* offer the only leading gay characters on broadcast television. The exit of NBC's *Will & Grace*, CBS' *Out of Practice* and ABC's *Crumbs* leaves most of the characterizations of gays and lesbians as minor or supporting players. In addition, there is a lack of diversity among this season's characters, with seven out of nine representing gay white men.

Meanwhile, cable and unscripted programming, continue to raise the bar by

exploring LGBT lives and families in multi-dimensional ways. On the mainstream cable networks, GLAAD counts 25 LGBT series regular characters that will appear during the 2006-07 season, one fewer than last year. Thanks to programming like Showtime's *The L Word* and HBO's *The Wire*, both entering their fourth seasons, and the N's *South of Nowhere*, now in its second season, LGBT stories continue to be told in diverse and compelling ways.

For 11 years, GLAAD has reported on the state of LGBT characters on television. For the second year in a row, GLAAD has examined the race and gender in addition to the sexual orientation of the 679 series regulars scheduled to appear on the broadcast networks during the 2006-07 season, based on information the networks provided by Aug. 18, 2006.

GLAAD's analysis finds that of 679 characters, male characters outweigh females 387 (57%) to 292 (43%) and that the faces on scripted network programs continue to be predominantly white at 513 (75%). African Americans make up 81 (12%) of the characterizations, down 2% from the previous season. Latina/o representation rose one percent for a total of 49 (7%). There are 18 (3%) Asian-Pacific Islander characters, 11 (2%) multi-racial characters, four (1%) of Middle Eastern origin, and three non-human characters.

"When you look at primetime's dismal lack of LGBT characters – combined with the continuing under-representation of people of color, gay and straight alike – it's clear that the broadcast networks have a long way to go before they accurately reflect the diversity of their audience and our society," Giuliano says.

Below is a summary of 2006-07 LGBT representations on television. Complete results of GLAAD's "Where We Are On TV" diversity survey can be accessed [here](#). (*hyperlink to "Where We Are on TV" on glaad.org*)

COMEDY ON BROADCAST NETWORKS

[Add in sidebar chart: 2006 – 2007 Announced LGBT Characters, Comedies]

Cheryl: this chart is found in Comm Server → Damon folder → 2006 – 2007 Diversity Report folder → FOR CHERYL folder → 2 Overview text, photos, graphs folder

At the end of last season, NBC's Emmy-winning series *Will & Grace* ended its eight-year run, leaving a void where two leading gay characters on network television once were. There is no network comedy on the horizon that is expected to bring the kind of visibility to our lives and stories the way *Will & Grace* did.

"The broadcast networks have a responsibility to fulfill the promise of *Will & Grace*," says Giuliano. "Not only is a show like this good TV, but it can foster acceptance, dialogue and respect — and it's the right thing to do. If the success of *Will & Grace* proved anything, it's that inclusion is good business."

It is, however, encouraging to note that two new situation comedies have ensemble casts that include gay characters in substantial roles: CBS presents *The Class* while ABC offers up *Help Me Help You*. Two of television's most popular comedies, ABC's *Desperate Housewives* and NBC's *The Office*, each continue to feature a gay supporting character regularly.

DRAMA ON BROADCAST NETWORKS

[Add in sidebar chart: 2006 – 2007 Announced LGBT Characters, Dramas]

Cheryl: this chart is found in Comm Server → Damon folder → 2006 – 2007 Diversity Report folder → FOR CHERYL folder → 2 Overview text, photos, graphs folder

LGBT series regulars remain missing from television's most popular dramas, the procedural crime shows such as *CSI*, *Law & Order* and *Criminal Minds*, yet LGBT stories are regularly told on these programs in a sensationalistic and often defamatory manner.

"It's clear that the writers of these programs are looking for interesting and gripping stories to tell, but it does a great disservice to the viewers and to the LGBT community when our only representation in the entire crime genre is as victim or villain," says GLAAD Entertainment Media Director Damon Romine. "Where are the gay cops, lawyers and forensic scientists? They certainly exist in real life but you would never know it by looking at the very large cast of characters on all of these crime shows. To fully represent the reality and diversity of our community, the procedural crime shows must also include us as part of the crime-fighting team."

The casts of broadcast television's medical dramas fare only slightly better in GLAAD's analysis. The networks' lone lesbian character, Dr. Kerry Weaver, remains on NBC's leading medical drama *ER*. ABC's *Grey's Anatomy* does not have any LGBT staff members at Seattle Grace Hospital, but the doctors do regularly visit gay bar owner Joe at Emerald City Bar for his sage advice.

CONTINUING DRAMAS MAKE HISTORY ON BROADCAST NETWORKS

For the first time in television history, the three networks that broadcast daytime dramas, ABC, CBS and NBC, each air a soap opera with a gay or lesbian character. On CBS' *As the World Turns*, Luke Snyder is a gay teen, while NBC's *Passions* features Simone, daytime's first African American lesbian. ABC periodically showcases Bianca on *All My Children* and Lucas Jones on *General Hospital*.

"What's unique and groundbreaking about these four series is that these characters are part of their show's core families," says Romine. "Each character has had a tremendous impact on bringing our stories into the living rooms of a very large audience that watches daytime TV."

Daily continuing dramas in primetime are new for the 2006-07 season. Borrowing a successful strategy from Spanish-language networks that air daily *telenovelas*, fledgling broadcaster MyNetworkTV will premiere two *telenovelas* in primetime this fall, including *Fashion House*. This five-day-a-week Bo Derek/Morgan Fairchild soap will air for 13 weeks and features two gay male fashion designers.

"Like *Fashion House*, CBS' popular daytime soap *The Bold & the Beautiful* is also about dueling fashion dynasties, but in all of its 20 years it's never featured a gay or lesbian designer," says Romine. "As gay characters become more common on soaps, I hope shows like *The Bold & the Beautiful* will see how important it is to be inclusive and tell our stories."

SCRIPTED CABLE PROGRAMMING

[Add in sidebar chart: 2006 – 2007 Announced LGBT Characters, Cable]

Cheryl: this chart is found in Comm Server → Damon folder → 2006 – 2007 Diversity Report folder → FOR CHERYL folder → 2 Overview text, photos, graphs folder

The number of LGBT portrayals on basic and premium cable remains strong this season in contrast to the broadcast networks. Two cable networks, here! and Logo, air original and acquired programming specifically for an LGBT audience. These networks reflect a large public interest in programs that more accurately represent LGBT lives. Logo, for example, airs *Noah's Arc*, a comedy about four African American gay men living in Los Angeles. Here! airs the supernatural gay drama *Dante's Cove*. Both shows are in their second seasons.

Among the other cable outlets that program for a broad-based audience, such as HBO, Showtime, FX and Comedy Central, GLAAD counts 25 LGBT scripted representations announced for the new season – 12 lesbians, 8 gay men, three bisexual women, one bisexual man, and one bisexual female-to-male transgender character, Max (Daniela Sea), who joined *The L Word* last season.

"Cable continues to be the place where we can find multi-dimensional, complex LGBT characters," Romine says. "Successful and popular cable programs seamlessly weave our stories and relationships into the fabric of shows that have a broad and mainstream audience, reflecting how our lives intersect with the larger culture."

YOUTH STORYLINES & PROGRAMMING

There is an upward trend of representation of gay and lesbian youth on broadcast television. Along with ABC's *Desperate Housewives'* Andrew (who was seen last season romancing boyfriend Justin), The CW will premiere *Hidden Palms* (from *Dawson's Creek* creator Kevin Williamson) featuring a gay teen at the center of the drama. Fox's returning *The War at Home* features a gay teen as best friend. All three shows were created by openly gay executive producers.

On The N, MTV Networks' channel for teens, *South of Nowhere* offers its second

season following the romance between two high school girls. *Degrassi: The Next Generation* features gay and lesbian teens Marco and Alex, respectively, as they struggle to adjust to life after graduation. New in 2007 is *The Block*, which also features a supporting gay character.

"These characters on television are giving LGBT youth visible, tangible evidence that they are not alone, and that what they are feeling is not unusual or wrong," says Romine. "With LGBT teens being two to three times more likely to commit suicide than other young people,¹ these characters can provide a lifeline for queer youth."

These shows have found a way to move beyond "coming out" stories which allow these characters to exist with their sexuality being just part of who they are. "The teen years can be dramatic no matter who you are, and it's important to show that not only do gay teens have challenges related to the fact that they're gay, but they also face the same challenges that everyone else has," says Romine.

LGBT PEOPLE OF COLOR ON TELEVISION

[Add in sidebar chart: 2006-07 Inclusive Series with POC Representation]

Cheryl: this chart is found in Comm Server → Damon folder → 2006 – 2007 Diversity Report folder → FOR CHERYL folder → 2 Overview text, photos, graphs folder

Of the nine series regular gay and lesbian characters on the broadcast networks this season, eight (8) are white and one (1), the supporting character of Oscar on NBC's *The Office*, is Latino. Of the 25 LGBT characters on cable, seven (7) are people of color. "Even with these representations, LGBT viewers of color will have a hard time finding fair, accurate and inclusive images of their lives and culture in programming this year," says Mónica Taher, GLAAD's People of Color (POC) Media Director.

LGBT Asian-Pacific Islanders (API) are completely absent from the broadcast networks, and only one such character can be found on cable, on HBO's *Entourage*. "This lack of visibility may be because sexuality has traditionally been a muted topic within the API community. By introducing new LGBT API characters, television can play a role in encouraging dialogue and awareness about our community," says Andy Marra, GLAAD's API Media Manager.

When it comes to representations of LGBT African Americans, there are no series regular characters on the networks, but ABC's *Big Day* offers the minor recurring role of Fred. "There is a viable black LGBT community that is hungry for images that authentically reflect their lives," says Katina Parker, GLAAD's Communities of African Descent Media Manager. "Network television is missing a huge opportunity in not seeking out and sharing those stories. Cable television is more inclusive in developing supporting and recurring black LGBT characters."

¹ Gibson, Paul. "Gay Male and Lesbian Suicide." 1989.

http://www.lambda.org/youth_suicide.htm

HBO's *The Wire* and FX's *The Shield* each feature representations of the African American LGBT experience. The gay-centric Logo has developed *Noah's Arc*, an original series with four leading black gay men, now in its second season.

Though characterizations of LGBT people of color may be slow to develop, LGBT-inclusive shows are being made available for Spanish-language viewers. ABC's *Desperate Housewives* and *Ugly Betty* and HBO's *Entourage* and *The Wire* are being dubbed and/or subtitled this season. In Spanish-language media, Telemundo's prime-time *telenovela*, *Tierra de Pasiones*, features three gay characters, and Univision offers *El Gordo y la Flaca* with Conchita, a transgender character.

Last season, two series made television history by developing characters who were openly gay and of Middle Eastern origin. Vince from ABC's *Commander in Chief* was a Palestinian American who was HIV-positive, a television first. VH1's *So NoTORIous* featured Sasan, who had Iranian parents. Neither show was picked up for a second season, and no new shows have announced any future gay character of Middle Eastern origin.

REALITY PROGRAMMING

As scripted network programming declines, unscripted reality and competition programming continues to be the most inclusive television genre, offering the chance for America to see LGBT people as they really are. On the broadcast networks, for example, the current season of CBS' *Big Brother* features Marcellas, an African American gay man, while that same network's *Amazing Race* will feature two gay-inclusive teams this fall: a lesbian paired with her father and a gay couple. Recently completed seasons of NBC's *Last Comic Standing* and ABC's *American Inventor* welcomed lesbians into the finals.

"When it comes to the broadcast networks, reality programming really is the place to see LGBT people as we are," says Romine. "These are images that are free from the often stereotypical presentations you find with scripted characters. LGBT participants on unscripted programs, for better and sometimes worse, are simply and refreshingly real, just like everyone else."

Cable television has certainly scored big with LGBT-inclusive reality series such as MTV's *The Real World*; Bravo's *Project Runway*, *Top Chef*, *Work Out* and *Queer Eye*; VH1's *Surreal Life*, *Celebrity Fit Club* and *Can't Get a Date*; and Oxygen's *The Janice Dickinson Modeling Agency*, featuring Dickinson's gay co-workers and a transgender model.

While most reality and competition shows that deal with dating and relationships (i.e. *The Bachelor*) don't involve LGBT participants, both MTV's *The Real World* and VH1's *Can't Get a Date*, which also airs on Logo, should be noted as programs that do not shy away from issues of gay and lesbian dating and

sexuality.

"The significance of LGBT-inclusive reality TV cannot be overestimated. We have competed and won alongside straight participants in *Survivor*, *The Amazing Race* and *Project Runway*, for example," says Romine. "Viewers watch reality television and see that we are just as much a part of the fabric of this country as anyone else."

[double space to set this off]

"Ultimately, the LGBT community wants to see itself represented on television and know that our lives matter," says Giuliano. "Whether it's on the broadcast networks or cable television, we want to be able to see ourselves and share our stories with others. It's that simple. There are many organized and extremely well-funded anti-gay activists who would like nothing more than to make us invisible. They know when our stories are told on television — and when viewers get to know someone who is gay or lesbian — hearts and minds can be changed forever."

The [GLAAD Media Awards](http://www.glaad.org/events/mediaawards/) recognize and honor individuals and projects in news and entertainment media for their fair, accurate and inclusive representations of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, and the issues that affect our lives. (*hyperlink to <http://www.glaad.org/events/mediaawards/>*)

Visit [TV Gayed](http://www.glaad.org/eye/tv_listings.php), GLAAD's Weekly Guide to What's LGBT on TV (*hyperlink to http://www.glaad.org/eye/tv_listings.php*)

Print-quality photos of selected LGBT television characters are available at: (***Cheryl, please link to hi-res image page***)

"GLAAD" and "Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation" are registered trademarks of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, Inc. This report may be freely distributed and reprinted in all forms of media under the condition that any text used carries the full attribution of "Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)."