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Written Document by: American Indians in Film and Television  
A National Advocacy Organization

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Federal Communications Commission  
Office of the Secretary

Subject: The Exclusion of the American Indian from the Airwaves of America.

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to address this very important forum.

My name is Sonny Skyhawk, I am Sicangu Lakota, and a proud member of the Rosebud Sioux Nation of South Dakota. My profession is to consult with tribal nations on media matters. I am also the Founder of AMERICAN INDIANS IN FILM AND TELEVISION, a National Advocacy Organization that seeks to create a better understanding of issues pertaining to the Image, Portrayal and depiction of the American Indian.

We are the only national organization that works exclusively on behalf of the American Indian people to monitor and ensure that the integrity and uniqueness of the heritage that we so proudly are a part of, is represented accurately and respectfully in the mediums of Film, Television, Radio and Print.

Many seasons and generations past, our ancestors welcomed visitors like yourselves with the raising of an open palm and the word "HAU" meaning "GREETINGS", and this evening, I on behalf of all American Indian people, locally and from all Native Nations across America, we would like to extend those same humble greetings and welcome you to our homelands.

Following in the footsteps and humble traits of our Grandparents, I will "Cut to the chase" no pun intended, by describing what we as an organization have come to believe to be the most blatantly discriminatory and systemic exclusion of any race of people, in the history and annals of the medium of Television, to be specific. In this particular area in which these hearings are being held, and across America, you can only surmise that the American Indian no longer exists on this Earth or that the "Western" did in fact do away with and annihilated all of the American Indian population. The total disregard to the meaning of TRUST RESPONSIBILITY wording obviously does not apply to these irresponsible holders of AIRWAVE LICENSES. By excluding or depriving the local communities from Native oriented programming it then becomes a great disservice to us all who call ourselves Americans.

I won't bore you with the statistics or delve into the sociological or economical ramifications or cause effect that this presents to our people, but again remind you that we are all equal as people and have the same aspirations and needs as any one else, and that the trust that has been given for you to administrate is very powerful.

Our stories or images are non-existent, and when and if seen, are of a negative and demeaning nature. Our children, past and present generations have yet to see themselves as the multi-dimensional, viable and contributing people of this nation. We are in reality in today's mainstream society, Doctor's, Teachers, Truck Drivers and Homemakers, yet again we are non-existent. There are many reasons and excuses that would probably try to explain this travesty, and enough blame to go around, but we are not here to conduct an audit on the past, but to expose an injustice that can be corrected by the effort and attention that you and only you as an agency of the government and body that regulates and issues the renewal of these licenses.

At a time not long ago, a common phrase called EQUAL TIME was heard, and used by Congress to provide and eventually legislate CHILDRENS PROGRAMMING on network television.

A disservice was again being committed against our young ones. That was changed through the efforts of people that saw the value and importance of that particular programming. Given and established by the recent census, Nielsen Ratings and various polls conducted by organizations like CHILDREN NOW, we as American Indians have been deemed as a "Quantifiable Segment of the Viewing Audience" of America. Am I proposing that Television and Radio stations be mandated to allocate a portion of Their/Our airwaves to Native Programming? YES! if need be.

*HAVING ESTABLISHED THAT WE ARE VIABLE CONSUMERS, VIEWING AUDIENCE AND*

None of us appreciate the government telling us what to do, but when irresponsibility permeates the decision making process and leads to the exclusion of people, then something is wrong with that process and change is inevitable. We all have to benefit equally or none of us are served.

The American Indian people only seek and hope to live in harmony and respect with all of Mother Earth's creations and humankind. Our ancestors spoke of the eventual need and acceptance and respect of each other and tonight we ask for your respect and insight in promulgating solutions that will effect how we are perceived as people, and for the sake of our future generations, so that they and others may come to know of the great contributions we have made to this great country we now call AMERICA. As my ancestors would advise, "RETURN TO WASHINGTON, AND LET YOUR CHIEFS KNOW THAT WE HAVE SPOKEN WITH A TRUE AND PROUD HEART." Pilamayapelo, Thank You

Mr. Sonny Skyhawk

Founder, AMERICAN INDIANS IN FILM AND TELEVISION