

Coalition Releases Report on Diversity in NY Theatre

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There is a little good news on the casting diversity front. The Asian American Performers Action Coalition (AAPAC) released a survey of the ethnic distribution of actors hired in the 2014-2015 theatre season on Broadway and at the top 16 not-for-profit theatre companies in New York City.

The survey found “there is a definite upward trend in the casting of actors of color,” but employment numbers still do not approach the proportion of non-white actors in the city.

The report, “Ethnic Representation on New York City Stages,” found that the New York City theatre industry hit a record high in diversity for the nine years AAPAC has been collecting data. For the first time, 30 percent of all available roles went to actors of color, a jump from 24 percent the previous year. The nine-year average was 23 percent, and the last three seasons exceeded that, meaning the trend was upward.

Information on the current 2015-2016 season is still being compiled and was not included.

Among bullet points in the study:

- African-American actors were cast in 17 percent of all roles, Latino actors in 3 percent, Asian American actors in 9 percent and all other minorities (including disabled actors) comprised less than 1 percent when looking at both Broadway and the non-profit theatre companies. Caucasian actors filled 70 percent of all roles. Caucasians continue to be the only ethnicity to over-represent compared to their respective population size in the New York City/the tri-State area.

- [On Broadway](#) in the 2014-15 season, numbers for minority actors dropped to 22 percent of all roles from 24 percent the previous year. Despite Asian numbers increasing from 2 percent to 11 percent (largely due to the Lincoln Center revival of *The King and I*, which was responsible for employing more than half of all Asians hired in the industry) and

Latino representation increasing slightly from 1 percent to 2 percent, numbers for African-American actors suffered a severe drop, from 21 percent in the 2013-14 season to only 9 percent in the latest year, one of the worst showings on record and leading to a net loss for the Broadway industry as a whole.

- The non-profit theatres were clearly the driving force behind the upswing in total minority actors, filling 38 percent of all available roles with actors of color, a 13 point jump from 25 percent the previous year and the highest point on record. The only non-profit theatre company in the study that hired no actors of color in 2014-2015 was the MCC Theatre Company.
- In the non-profit sector, African-American employment saw the largest increase, filling 26 percent of all roles, a significant leap from 13 percent the previous year and a record high for African-American employment for the years we have data. Of all the non-profit theatre companies, The Public Theater hired the most African American actors with the largest number of contracts going to its Off-Broadway production of *Hamilton*. The survey predates the Broadway production.
- Latino representation within the non-profit sector remained unchanged from the previous year, holding steady at 4 percent.
- Asian American representation within the non-profit sector increased to 7 percent from 5 percent the preceding season. Percentages of Asian-American representation among the non-profits have been higher than the 9-year average of 4.4 percent for the past 3 years, indicating an upward trend. In the survey year, every one of the non-profit theatres studied employed Asian American actors except for MCC Theater, Primary Stages, Signature Theatre and [York Theatre Company](#).
- Only 10.2 percent of all available roles were non-traditionally cast this season, down from 11.2 percent the previous year. This year's levels revert back to the nine-year average of 10 percent after slight upticks in the preceding two seasons. Non-traditional casting percentages have largely remained stagnant over the nine years studied and have not moved as significantly as the percentages for total minority employment.
- 5.3 percent of roles went to African-American actors for roles that were not defined by their race.
- 2.3 percent of roles went to Latino actors for roles that were not defined by their race.
- 2.0 percent of roles went to Asian-American actors for roles that were not defined by their race. Asian Americans were the minority group least likely to be able to transcend their race.