

TO OUR PUBLIC MEDIA COLLEAGUES

open letter

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# dear friends

**IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE** that we, media organizations representing communities underserved by public broadcasting, present an Open Letter to Our Public Media Colleagues on the vital issue of diversity, developed as one part of the *Enhancing Services to Underserved Audiences* initiative undertaken by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in 2008. We thank the leadership of CPB for encouraging our efforts to advance diversity as a core value throughout public media, and for their assistance in the production and dissemination of this letter.

Our aim is to not merely stimulate reflection, conversation or debate on this as yet unfulfilled aspect of our public trust, but to spark action on every level and in the farthest reaches of the public media landscape, including stations, producing entities, and national organizations. We encourage you to share this letter within your organization and with your community, and especially with your boards of directors.

We look forward to working with you to develop the strategies for a more inclusive, diverse and effective public media service.

Thank you,

- **African-American Public Radio Consortium**
- **Center for Asian American Media**
- **Koahnic Broadcast Corporation**
- **Latino Public Broadcasting**
- **Latino Public Radio Consortium**
- **National Black Programming Consortium**
- **Native American Public Telecommunications**
- **Native Public Media**
- **Pacific Islanders in Communications**

# an open letter

## to Our Public Media Colleagues

As 2009 begins, we call on our colleagues to reflect on our public telecommunications mandate and work together to realize its unfulfilled promise: a public media system that truly serves the diverse nation we have become. Unprecedented demographic changes are transforming every aspect of the United States. African Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans make up half the population of the nation's largest cities and constitute its fastest growing market segment. Latino and Asian immigrants are putting down roots in rural and suburban America. Pacific Islanders are on the forefront in our increasingly pan-Pacific economy and culture. Native Americans are flexing their political and economic muscle, and America has elected its first African American president.

Caught up in a cyclical struggle for survival, our public media institutions have not kept pace with these changes. If we don't address the diversity gap in our system, we risk failure or irrelevance. Our system suffers from:

- A lack of diverse voices where decisions are made about the present and future of public broadcasting;
- Underemployment of people of color by the nation's public broadcasting institutions, stations, and major content producers;
- A lack of authentic and relevant programming created by diverse producers;
- A resulting lack of diversity among public television and public radio audiences.

In the language of the U. S. Constitution, we strive for political equality where no citizen's interest is disregarded because of race, religion, sex, age, political beliefs or place of birth. Our public media system is the nation's communications public square. It must be open to the full span of community voices, worldviews, narratives, frames, and lenses.

Many of us entered the broadcast field to heed a public service calling articulated by the Public Telecommunications Act of 1967. Let us consider the vision:

- Public media shall serve the instructional, educational and cultural needs of the entire nation.
- Public media shall involve creative risk and address the needs of un-served and underserved audiences, particularly children and minorities.

- Universal access shall be guaranteed through all appropriate distribution technologies.
- Freedom, imagination and initiative are necessary to the development and expansion of excellent and diverse programming.

These founding principles guide today's call to action. They set forth goals and objectives that are renewable, inspirational and attainable. We now have the bandwidth to build a public media system to serve America's increasingly diverse demographic while remaining vital and relevant to our core audiences. Reaching out to new constituencies while serving existing audiences is the imminent business challenge of the next decade. The challenge is more than a moral imperative: What's at stake is our ability to not just survive, but to thrive in the new media market.

## **Diversity = Sustainability**

Up to now, we have operated via a centralized broadcast system providing content to local stations, which in turn serve local communities. Geography has been definitive. As our system restructures to reflect the changing media landscape, new constituencies will be based on other criteria: generational, linguistic, cultural, instructional, and yet-to-be-defined niche audiences. The delivery systems we develop must reflect this evolving landscape.

The commitment to embrace diversity as a core principle of our work requires that we engage more deeply with its complexity. In addition to race and ethnicity, diversity includes perspectives and identities generally underrepresented in our mainstream media due to geography, income and education levels, physical disability and sexual preference. We must identify and target the following sectors, whose dynamism and fluidity exemplify public media's future audiences.

America's younger and more ethnically diverse audiences are public media's great, untapped resource. Young viewers and listeners are multilingual and multicultural, passionate bloggers and voracious content seekers. The increasingly commercial Internet positions them primarily as consumers, but they are hungry to exercise their power of choice as global citizens and generators of media content in the new digital landscape. For example, young African American adults, especially college educated, are avid Internet users. They frequent alternative news sources online and download digital content, including radio and television programs, podcasts and interactive media. Our public media system must target these savvy post-broadcast audiences and provide a civic public interest sector in emerging broadcast systems, mobile media and on the web.

At the same time, the digital revolution has yet to make good on its potential to remove barriers. A large percentage of people of color, immigrants and low-income groups remain disadvantaged by the digital divide. Our public media system has a special responsibility to provide universal access to underserved, technologically disenfranchised communities that have not yet benefited from the new delivery platforms. Furthermore, we must develop user-friendly tools to optimize their involvement in public media services. Digital technology offers flexibility to incorporate the linguistic, geographic, and ethnic diversity of America. A revitalized public broadcast system will be based on a more inclusive grid of stakeholders, and play a pro-active role educating diverse constituencies and audiences about how to participate in the new media.

The paradigm shift we describe is cultural and attitudinal as well as demographic. Public media's core audience is comprised of Sixties generation baby boomers who have seen the world and are hungry for global perspectives and diverse viewpoints in the media they consume. Public media must also provide fresh and original content representing the full range of traditions and cultures that make up our American mosaic.

To meet the complex challenges ahead, we must transform not only how we create and provide content. We need a new spirit of inclusiveness and collaboration that engages our ethnically diverse colleagues and taps the broadest range of intellectual and creative capital in our industry. Envisioning the future of public media requires flexibility, imagination, leadership and courage.

To address the new demographics on a strategic scale, we propose the following steps:

- People of color must participate in executive, visionary and creative decision making throughout the public media system.
- Program support and content must reflect our nation's full diversity, broadening the representation as well as perspective of all of public media's content.
- Diversity must be a core component in recruitment, hiring, training, and retention at all employment levels, but particularly in management and leadership positions.
- Effective strategies for the efficient redeployment of resources must meet the criteria of diversity, innovation and inclusion.
- Measurable standards with specific goals must be instituted, including an annual report card to evaluate and reward diversity and innovation in content, programming and delivery.

- Best practices must be developed and disseminated for cross-cultural community engagement and programming strategies.

We call on our colleagues to revitalize our public telecommunications mandate and make common cause to advance this blueprint for change. We commit to a sustainable vision of a public media system that fosters excellence and innovation; embraces diversity as a core principle in services and perspectives at every level of content (programming and production), engagement (education and outreach), and human resources (leadership, training, and management).

*Patricia Boero*

Patricia Boero  
**Latino Public Broadcasting**

*Ruth Bolan*

Ruth Bolan  
**Pacific Islanders  
in Communications**

*Stephen Gong*

Stephen Gong  
**Center for Asian American Media**

*Florence Hernández-Ramos*

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**Latino Public Radio Consortium**

*Jacquie Jones*

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**National Black Programming  
Consortium**

*Loretta Rucker*

Loretta Rucker  
**African-American Public  
Radio Consortium**

*Jaclyn Sallee*

Jaclyn Sallee  
**Koahnic Broadcast  
Corporation**

*Shirley Sneve*

Shirley Sneve  
**Native American  
Public Telecommunications**

*Loris Taylor*

Loris Taylor  
**Native Public Media**



**RUTH BOLAN**  
**Pacific Islanders in Communications**  
[www.piccom.org](http://www.piccom.org)

The mission of Pacific Islanders in Communications (PIC) is to support, advance, and develop Pacific Island media content and talent that results in a deeper understanding of Pacific Island history, culture, and contemporary challenges. Our purpose is to fund and distribute film, video, and new media to the broadest possible audience, and to support

media talent through scholarships, training, and professional development. Current projects include a major series for PBS in partnership with National Geographic.

Ruth Bolan has been Executive Director of PIC since 2005 and has worked in the entertainment industry for over 25 years. She produced theater at the John F. Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center and on Broadway. She produced television for HBO and American Playhouse. Ms. Bolan graduated with honors from Harvard University.



**PATRICIA BOERO**  
**Latino Public Broadcasting**  
[www.lpbp.org](http://www.lpbp.org)

Latino Public Broadcasting (LPB)'s mission is to support the development, production, acquisition and distribution of public media that is representative of Latino people, or addresses issues of interest to Latino Americans. Created in 1998, LPB has provided over 100 hours of programming to PBS, and supports the professional development of Latino

producers. In 2006, LPB launched VOCES, the first Latino anthology series on public television. LPB is co-producing *The Latino Americans*, a public media project that chronicles the history of Latinos in the United States.

Patricia Boero is the Executive Director of LPB. She studied film, arts and law at the University of New South Wales in Australia. Boero directed documentary films, including *Paraguay, the Forgotten Dictatorship*, for SBS TV, Film Australia, and TV Latina, and was a correspondent for BBC radio and producer for CNN in Latin America. In the U.S., she has worked at the Rockefeller, MacArthur and Levi Strauss foundations, and was director of international programs at the Sundance Institute. Boero has served on the Boards of LPB, INPUT, American Documentary, Inc., and The Bay Area Video Coalition.



**STEPHEN GONG**  
**Center for Asian American Media**  
[www.asianamericanmedia.org](http://www.asianamericanmedia.org)

Stephen Gong is the Executive Director of the Center for Asian American Media, a non-profit organization founded in 1980 and dedicated to presenting stories that convey the richness and diversity of Asian American experiences to the broadest audience possible. We do this by funding, producing, distributing and exhibiting works in film, television and digital media.

Gong has had a long career in film preservation, education, and arts administration. His previous positions have included Deputy Director of the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, program officer in the Media Arts program at the National Endowment for the Arts, and Associate Director of the National Center for Film and Video Preservation at the American Film Institute. He has been a lecturer at UC Berkeley in the Asian American Studies program. In addition to writing about film history, Gong has provided critical commentary on several DVD projects, including *Lotus Blossom* for the Treasures From American Archives, *Chan is Missing* (dir. Wayne Wang), and is the featured historian in the recent documentary *Hollywood Chinese* (dir. Arthur Dong).

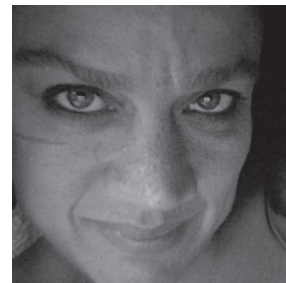


**FLORENCE HERNANDEZ-RAMOS**  
**Latino Public Radio Consortium**  
[www.latinopublicradioconsortium.org](http://www.latinopublicradioconsortium.org)

In 2007 Flo retired from KUVU, a Latino-controlled public radio jazz station in Denver that she helped found and for which she was CEO from 1983 to 2007. Because of her background in public radio and her knowledge of Latino contributions to the public media system, she was selected as Project Director of the Latino Public Radio Consortium.

In partnership with its allies, the Latino Public Radio Consortium will change the world of public broadcasting. The number of Latinos who listen to public radio programming will increase. The future brings growth in Latino philanthropy for public radio individually as listener-members and in corporate and foundation support for Latino-centric public radio services and projects. More Latinos will invest their sweat equity in public radio, either as employees, members of Boards of Directors or volunteers.

The LPRC founding document *The Brown Paper*, available at the LPRC website [www.latinopublicradioconsortium.org](http://www.latinopublicradioconsortium.org), outlines ways in which the public media system can better serve Latino audiences.



**JACQUIE JONES**  
**National Black Programming Consortium**  
[www.nbpc.tv](http://www.nbpc.tv)

Jacquie Jones is an advocate for diverse voices in all aspects of public media and is the executive director of the National Black Programming Consortium (NBPC), a thirty-year-old institution that funds, trains and distributes public media content related to the black experience. Since its founding in 1979, NBPC has provided hundreds of broadcast

hours of programming to American public television, including such award-winning and critically acclaimed films as *The Murder Of Emmett Till*, *Citizen King* and *Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes*. In her capacity at NBPC, Jones founded the New Media Institute and established the content portal [www.blackpublicmedia.org](http://www.blackpublicmedia.org) and is a former chair of the National Minority Consortia.

Prior to taking over the leadership of NBPC, Jones had a distinguished career as a Peabody Award-winning documentary filmmaker having produced and directed such films as *Africans in America: Brotherly Love* and *Matters of Race* for PBS, *Behind Closed Doors: Sex in 20th Century America* for Showtime, and the series of shorts, *the World Before Us* for the History Channel International. She is also a contributor to *Ebony.com* and serves on the boards of Grantmakers in Film and Electronic Media (GFEM) and the Integrated Media Association (IMA).



**LORETTA RUCKER**  
**African-American Public Radio Consortium**  
[lerucker@aol.com](mailto:lerucker@aol.com)

Loretta Rucker is the founding Executive Director of the African-American Public Radio Consortium, made up of 20 stations licensed to black universities (80%) and community nonprofit organizations (20%). The Consortium's mission is to increase public radio service to African-American and diverse audiences, and to build the capacity of stations serving those audiences.

The Consortium will build a network of stations nationwide that are providing quality public radio services to African-Americans both on terrestrial stations and online.

The Consortium supports stations through strategic planning, training, research, fundraising assistance – and by developing content and stations' web capabilities. Through a partnership with NPR the Consortium created *The Tavis Smiley Show* in 2002, *News and Notes* in 2005 and *Tell Me More* in 2007. This year the Consortium launched *The Michael Eric Dyson Show*. Ongoing work continues to enhance stations' local service, national content and expansion of their audiences to the web.

Loretta Rucker is a 28-year public radio professional. After working at major market public radio stations (Washington DC, New York/New Jersey) for a decade, she ran a consulting practice focusing on building the capacity of African-American, Latino and Native American public radio stations before establishing the Consortium.



**JACLYN SALLEE**  
**Koahnic Broadcast Corporation**  
[www.knba.org](http://www.knba.org)

Jaclyn Sallee (Inupiat) is the President and CEO of Koahnic Broadcast Corporation, a Native American media center based in Anchorage, Alaska with a national radio production and distribution unit in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Ms. Sallee has been with Koahnic since its inception in July 1995 and has served as its President and CEO since December 1997.

Nearly a decade ago, Ms. Sallee found the KBC Training Program --- to provide educational opportunities for Native people seeking or pursuing media careers. Ms. Sallee is a Rotarian and her experience includes service on several community and industry boards and committees including the Advisory Council for Native Public Media, The CIRI Foundation Board of Directors, Operations Board of The Foraker Group, Alaska Broadcasters Association Equal Opportunity Committee, University of Alaska-Fairbanks Department of Journalism/Broadcasting Advisory Board, Native Communications Group and the Steering Committee for the Alaska Native Communications Society. Ms. Sallee has developed many award winning programs including *Native Word of the Day*, *Stories of our People*, *National Native News* and the local KNBA news programs. She is instrumental in breaking new ground in sustaining Alaska's Native languages through creative radio programming. Ms. Sallee is a recipient of YCWA's Women of Achievement and Anchorage Chamber of Commerce's Top 40 Under 40 Award.



**SHIRLEY K. SNEVE**  
**Native American Public Telecommunications**  
[www.nativetelecom.org](http://www.nativetelecom.org)

Shirley K. Sneve is the Executive Director of Native American Public Telecommunications, whose mission is to share Native stories with the world through support of the creation, promotion, and distribution of Native public media. Prior to her work at NAPT, she was the director of Arts Extension Service, an arts service organization, based at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst, from 2001-2004. A member of

the Rosebud Sioux Tribe of South Dakota, Shirley was a founder of Northern Plains Tribal Arts Market, the Oyate Trail cultural tourism byway, and the Alliance of Tribal Tourism Advocates in South Dakota. She was director of the Washington Pavilion of Arts and Science Visual Arts Center in Sioux Falls, assistant director of the South Dakota Arts Council and minority affairs producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting. Shirley taught Native American Studies at Augustana College and the University of Sioux Falls. She is a graduate of South Dakota State University in journalism, with minors in music, Native American Studies and German. Shirley serves on the board of The Association of American Cultures (TAAC), the Native American Journalists Association (NAJA), Working Films, and the Arts Extension Institute. She is a member of Lincoln Rotary Club #14.



**LORIS ANN TAYLOR**  
**Native Public Media**  
[www.nativepublicmedia.org](http://www.nativepublicmedia.org)

Native Public Media (NPM) was founded in 2004 by leaders in Native public radio who saw the need and opportunity for greatly expanded media access and participation among Native Americans. For far too long, Native America has been largely ignored or misrepresented by mainstream media. Despite these obstacles, Native Americans have

built a network of 33 public radio stations (with 33 new construction permits) and have begun to utilize alternate media platforms to serve our communities. These stations provide critically important news, information and cultural programming to the communities they serve. Collectively, Native public radio stations constitute a \$7+ million enterprise, employing hundreds of people across Indian Country and engaging hundreds more volunteers annually.

The only organization of its kind, Native Public Media is wholly dedicated to building and advancing Native access to, ownership of, and participation in media. NPM's mission is to promote healthy, engaged, independent Native communities by strengthening and expanding Native American media capacity and by empowering a strong, proud Native American voice. Since its inception, NPM has focused on using media as a tool for advancing economic development, preserving language and culture, promoting health and education, and facilitating engagement by Native Americans with the issues that affect our Tribes and communities.

NPM builds on partnerships that will raise the visibility of Native media and grow alliances for equitable policy reform by: active involvement on the National Congress of American Indians Telecommunications Subcommittee; a visible presence at the National Conferences for Media Reform and the Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society; and working collaboratively with PBS, WGBH on the documentary series, *We Shall Remain: A Native History of America* by producing the radio documentary portion of the groundbreaking multimedia project. NPM's Advisory Council is comprised of leaders in Native America, media and community development.



CENTER FOR  
**ASIAN AMERICAN MEDIA**

