AN OPEN LETTER TO HOLLYWOOD
From your transgender and nonbinary colleagues, and our allies

Dear Hollywood,

We know that the best storytelling is diverse storytelling, and it's clear that Hollywood is at a tipping point. Studios and production companies are bringing more people into the creative process, hearing their stories and creating better films and TV shows because of it. It is time for transgender people to be included in this conversation.

First, some things you should know. As a community, trans people are fighting every day to be seen and accepted as human beings. Some in Washington, D.C., are trying to erase trans people from our culture by banning us from serving in the military, allowing health insurance companies to deny us medical care and refusing to protect trans youth in schools. In the past 18 months, at least 44 trans people have been murdered in the U.S., almost all of them trans women of color. The unemployment rate of trans people is three times the national average — and four times for trans people of color. Thirty percent of trans people live in poverty, twice the national average. When visiting a healthcare professional, one in three trans people has been verbally harassed by the doctor or denied medical care. Transgender Americans face bullying in school, discrimination on the job and violence on the street. Perhaps most alarmingly, because the culture is so transphobic, 40% of trans people report attempting suicide, compared with 4.6% of the general population.

That's a lot of negative information, but we hope it helps explain why transgender people are pushing so hard to be heard. It's because we are struggling to survive.

The world is unsafe for trans people — and we can do better.

In the U.S., 80% of people say they don't know a trans person in their family, workplace or school. That's where Hollywood comes in. Hollywood tells the stories that help people understand how to feel about themselves and how to feel about people around them who are different. As Roger Ebert said, film is an empathy machine. We know projects like “Ellen,” “Will & Grace,” “Brokeback Mountain,” “Milk” and “Moonlight” helped to break down stereotypes about gay and lesbian people, and the timeline for marriage equality would have been remarkably different without them. Women, people of color, people with disabilities and diverse faith groups have made it clear they want more authentic stories about their lives in films and on TV. Trans people feel the same way.

We are grateful that Hollywood is starting to embrace these myriad points of view. It may seem as if some trans people are overly sensitive about how trans stories are developed and told. But we have grown up watching films and TV shows in which we have been portrayed almost exclusively as tragic victims, psychotic killers and one-dimensional stereotypes. We have been confused with drag queens, seen our history erased in historical films and been ridiculed for gender expressions that don’t conform to social norms.

We believe that we are at an unprecedented cultural moment — a moment when we can ask Hollywood to use its power to improve the lives of trans people by changing America’s understanding about who trans people are. We want to help you tell our rich and diverse stories, and we need your help to do it.

This is about more than diversity and inclusion. It’s about empowering trans people and sharing with us the tools and access that have been offered to you throughout your career. It’s about offering people who are different from you the confidence and the sense of belonging that the very best art.

We know Hollywood is a business as well as a creative community. We are not asking you to stop making money. We are asking to be brought to the table, so that our knowledge, talent and stories can help improve your work and increase its value.

“Transform Hollywood,” a guidebook created by GLAAD and 5050by2020.com, is an invitation to begin to co-create this future by changing the way trans people are portrayed in media and culture. In the guide, you’ll find:

- Information about how to find trans actors, and cast trans roles authentically;
- Advice on engaging with trained and experienced trans creators as you develop your work;
- Suggestions on where to find projects created by trans people that you can develop for film and television; and
- Tips on how to make all of your work more trans-inclusive, even if it’s not specifically about trans characters.

We believe that when trans people are empowered to help culture makers tell our authentic stories, it will improve how we are treated in the real world. Those negative statistics above will become a part of our history, not our present. Let’s work together to create a beautiful, diverse and inclusive world in which trans people are fully accepted as equal human beings.

Signed by trans people working within these organizations, and allies who support us:

5050by2020
3 Arts Entertainment
Abrams Artists Agency
ACLU
ACLU SoCal
Act III Prods.
Apatow Prods.
ARRAY Alliance
Bad Robot
Belafonte Prods.
The Bicklist
CAA
Casting Society of America
Chingona Prods.
Color Of Change
CultureStrike
Endeavor Content
Framepline
Geena Davis Media Institute
GLAAD
Glo Nation
Half Initiative
Harness
ICM
Los Angeles LGBT Center
Made Up Stories
Muckle Man Prods.
Muslim Public Affairs Council
Hollywood Bureau
National Center for
Transgender Equality
Outfest
Participant Media
RespectAbility
Ryan Murphy Prods.
SAG-AFTRA
SAG-AFTRA Foundation
Sea Change Media
Shondaland
Sony Pictures Classics
Sundance Institute
Time’s Up
Topple
Trans Wellness Center
Transgender Law Center
UTA
WME
Women In Film
Working Title