

LENNY HENRY: BAFTA TELEVISION LECTURE 2014

"I Have a Dream Screen"

Practical Details Of How To Adapt The Success of Increasing Regional Diversity For Increasing BAME Diversity In Television

OBJECTIVE

To demonstrate how the recent model to increase regional diversity can be adapted to increase BAME diversity and to address practical concerns in its implementation.

BACKGROUND

In 2008 the BBC made the following commitments to growing regional production outside of London:

- that 50% of network spend will be made outside London by 2016
- that 17% of network spend will come from the Nations by 2016 and that, in the interim, 12% of spend will come from the Nations by 2012
- that a proportion of network spend would be made in Scotland, equivalent to Scotland's share of the UK population, with a comparable approach in relation to Wales and Northern Ireland.

Subsequent to making these commitments the BBC's (and other broadcasters') regional production and on screen representation has grown accordingly. The move has not only increased BBC diversity in the Nations and Regions but by growing the talent base outside of London it has served to increase Regional productions by other broadcasters as well.

Central to the increase in Nation and Regional production diversity is the principle that the licence fee spend and on screen representation should reflect the people who pay the licence fee. This principle is reflected in the BBC Broadcasting Charter Agreement 2006 that the BBC's "public purposes are: sustaining citizenship and civil society; promoting education and learning; stimulating creativity and cultural excellence; ***representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities***" (our italics). We believe that BAME representation comes under the "communities" definition of the Charter Agreement and while the nations and regions representation has been addressed this now needs to be extended to addressing the serious under-representation of BAME "communities".

PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF EXTENDING THE NATIONS AND REGIONS MODEL TO BAME PRODUCTIONS

Defining A BAME Production

The BBC uses [Ofcom's definitions of regional production](#) in order to meet its Nations and Regions targets.

These definitions state that in order for a commission to qualify as a Regional Production it must meet *at least two* out of the following three criteria:

- **a.** the production company must have a substantive business and production based in the UK outside the M25. A base will be taken to be substantive if it is the usual place of employment of executives managing the regional business, of senior personnel involved in the production in question, and of senior personnel involved in seeking programme commissions;
- **b.** at least 70% of the production budget (excluding the cost of on-screen talent, archive material and copyright costs) must be spent in the UK outside the M25; and
- **c.** at least 50% of the production talent (i.e. not on-screen talent) by cost must have their usual place of employment in the UK outside the M25. Freelancers without a usual place of employment outside the M25 will nonetheless count for this purpose if they live outside the M25. Ofcom will consider as part of their 2004 review whether this percentage should rise over time.

These criteria can be easily adapted to define a BAME production in the following way:

- **a.** at least 50% of the production talent (i.e. not on-screen talent) by cost must be Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic. The production staff will be self-declaring about their ethnicity (self declaration is a common principle in both police, health and other government monitoring of BAME statistics).
- **b.** the production company must be 30% BAME controlled and/or the executives managing the business must be 30% BAME, and/or 30% of senior personnel involved in the production in question must be BAME, and/or 30% of senior personnel involved in seeking programme commissions must be BAME.
- **c.** at least 50% of on-screen talent by cost must be Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic

As with qualifying Nations and Regions production we would expect two out of the three criteria to be satisfied in order to qualify as a BAME production. Indie producers would have a duty to monitor their workforces effectively if they want to comply with the criteria.

Ring Fenced Money

The BBC and other broadcasters have previously set quotas in order to meet their Nations and Regions quotas. We are concerned that adopting the same principles of quotas for BAME productions may leave us open to possible legal challenges.

For this reason we propose "ring-fenced production money" which can be bid for by qualifying BAME productions. The broadcasters would only be able to spend this money on qualifying BAME productions. If no suitable productions were found in a financial year these budgets would either be "rolled over" into the next financial year or be taken back from the specific genre commissioners and channel controllers.

Introduce BAME commissioners

The BBC has introduced programme commissioners to actively seek out and commission from production companies from the Nations and Regions. The principle behind this was to address both the institutional barriers and informal processes that BBC employees and production companies in the Nations and Regions face when trying to get their ideas commissioned.

In the same principle commissioners should be appointed to actively seek out and commission from BAME productions. These commissioners do not have to be BAME themselves but obviously will need intimate knowledge of BAME productions and BBC internal staff.

The commissioners will be focused on specific genres (drama, current affairs, daytime etc) and will work directly to the relevant Head of Genre Commissioning. They will also be appointed by the Head of Genre Commissioning as we believe that the relationship of trust between the Head of

Genre Commissioning and BAME commissioner will be vital to its success – as has been proved in the Nations and Regions commissioners. (Please see the following section for the genre specific focus of the BAME commissioners)

Focus On Two Areas: Drama and Current Affairs.

In increasing Nations and Regions productions the BBC recognised the necessity to create a critical mass in specific genres and previous attempts to increase N&R productions without focus was actually counter-productive.

This led to different Nations and Regions being set up as "centers of excellence", for example Northern Ireland has been designated as the centre of excellence for Current Affairs programmes with a quota set accordingly. This does not stop Belfast from successfully bidding for programmes in other genres but creates a base of expertise that it can build from. The same is true for Sport in Salford and Science in Scotland.

For BAME productions we propose that the broadcasters begin by focusing on just three genres in increasing BAME representation: scripted drama, scripted comedy and current affairs. Recent audience research suggests the largest divergence between BAME and white audiences are in drama/comedy. Current affairs is possibly the most important genre for the needs and concerns of any population to be reflected and addressed. By concentrating our efforts this would also have the added bonus of creating a "critical mass" which is so vital in creating real change.

Not Just the BBC

Although this paper has focused on the example of the BBC these initiatives must be industry wide - just as Channel 4 have also appointed Regional Commissioners and ensured that it commissions from non-London based indies.

To encourage this we could explore how ring-fenced money for BAME productions should be written into broadcasters' license agreements. We would also explore possible tax breaks for BAME productions or adapting the current Apprenticeship model to encourage employers to take on new employees.