

# APAMC

Asian Pacific American Media Coalition

## Report Cards for Networks 2018-19 Season

(Grades for 2017-18 in parentheses)

	<b>ABC</b>	<b>CBS</b>	<b>FOX</b>	<b>NBC</b>
	Grades	Grades	Grades	Grades
<b>Actors (regular/recurring)</b>	A- (A-)	B- (B-)	D+ (F)	C+ (C)
<b>Unscripted (hosts/contestants)</b>	C- (C)	C+ (C-)	C+ (F)	D+ (C)
<b>Writers/Producers</b>	B (B)	C+ (C+)	C+ (F)	C (B-)
<b>Directors (incl # of episodes directed)</b>	B+ (B)	B+ (B+)	B (F)	C+ (C)
<b>Development</b>	B+ (C+)	B (B)	F/I* (F)	C- (B-)
<b>Commitment to Diversity</b>	A- (A-)	B (B)	D+ (F)	C+ (B-)
<b>Diversity Dept. Relationship</b>	B- (B+)	B (B)	C- (F)	C+ (C-)
<b>OVERALL GRADE</b>	<b>B (B)</b>	<b>B- (B-)</b>	<b>C- (F)</b>	<b>C (C)</b>

\*Incomplete, no data provided by network

## **EXPLANATION OF APAMC REPORT CARDS FOR THE TV NETWORKS IN THE 2018-19 SEASON, AND HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CURRENT 2019-20 SEASON**

ABC received the highest overall grade (B) for third year in a row. They led with the highest grade in 5 of the 7 categories: Actors (A-; third consecutive year), Commitment to Diversity (A; likewise), Development (B+), Directors (B+; tied with CBS), and Writers/Producers (B).

CBS led with Directors (B+; tied with ABC), Diversity Department Relationship (B) and Unscripted (C+; tied with Fox).

NBC led in no categories. In fact, it placed last in 3 of them: Unscripted (D+), Directors (C+) and Writers/Producers (C).

While Fox tied with CBS for best Unscripted grade (C+), the network scored worst in 4 categories: Development (F/Incomplete information), Commitment to Diversity (D+), Diversity Department Relationship (C-) and Actors (D+, Fox's lowest grade in this category since the APAMC's first report card for the 2000-01 season 18 years ago). Fox gets an overall grade of C- (for the first time since the 2010-11 season when it also received a C-), suggesting that by not having annual meetings with the APAMC, the network has not kept APAs on its radar.

The letter grades for each network for various categories are based on data provided to the Coalition by the networks themselves. The final "overall" grade is compiled by averaging the category grades using a standard 4-point scale for each network. Grades for the four networks for the 2018-19 season are described further below, followed by some comments on the current 2019-20 season.

### **ABC**

*Actors:* During the 2018-19 season, ABC had 23 APA regulars on its series, slightly down from the previous season's 24, but percentagewise, they went up among all regulars (10.9% to 11.4%). Of concern, the number of APA recurring actors was cut almost in half from 27 (7.7%) to 14 (5.7%)

We recognize that Shonda Rhimes has been a trailblazer in demonstrating the power of diverse storytelling for over a decade. Still, we have annually pointed out to ABC executives that Rhimes' shows set in Seattle have never reflected that city's ethnic reality (Asian Americans comprise 14% of the population), and that there have been no APA regulars on "Grey's Anatomy" for years (only one recurring actor in Alex Landi), and 1 regular and no recurring APAs on "Station 19." Other Rhimes-created shows fare no better: 1 regular and 1 recurring APA actor on the Philly-based "How To Get Away With Murder," and no APA regulars nor recurring on the NY-based "For the People." These are significant missed opportunities that the network should seize to give APAs more representation and the series greater authenticity.

On the plus side, the strongest regular roles from the previous season were retained (e.g., all 6 regulars on "Fresh Off the Boat," Chloe Bennett and Ming Na on "Agents of SHIELD"), and several new regular roles were memorable (e.g., Christina Chang and Will Yun Lee on "Good

Doctor,” and Vir Das on “Whiskey Cavalier”). So, ABC holds on to its A- grade for Actors (the highest grade ever given in this category).

*Unscripted:* The number of ABC’s regular hosts/judges fell (7.3% to 4%), most coming from holiday shows which ran for just a few weeks. The most prominent unscripted APA regular continues to be Carrie Ann Inaba, a judge on “Dancing with the Stars,” which dates back to 2005. ABC’s grade dips from C to C-.

*Writers/Producers:* For the past two seasons, ABC has employed 43 writers and/or producers, by far the highest of any network. However, in addition to barely using Asian American actors in the Shonda Rhimes shows, those showrunners haven’t hired a single APA producer for any of those series. ABC’s grade remains a B.

*Directors:* ABC jumped year-to-year from 10 to 14 unique directors (4.9% to 7.5%) whose number of total episodes directed rose from 26 to 34 (6.1% to 6.8%). The network’s rating improves from B to B+.

*Development:* Although none of their APA-led pilots went to series, ABC could’ve had the best development season involving Asian Americans ever. The network jumps a full grade from C+ to B+.

*Commitment to Diversity* (pipeline programs). ABC has continued to reach out to coalition members, involving us in quarterly updates and brainstorming sessions to build its diversity database and promote its programs, including various Disney cable channels. ABC also maintains good participation of APAs in pipeline programs. It retains its A- grade.

*Diversity Dept. Relationship:* ABC’s data presentation has changed for the past two years, leading to confusion. In part because its data has had to be continually updated or resorted, its grade falls from B+ to B-.

## **CBS**

*Actors:* Regular and recurring actors fell slightly from 21 to 20 regulars (10% to 10%) and 27 to 29 recurring (14% to 11%). The network maintained most of its strongest regular APA roles (e.g., Lucy Liu on “Elementary,” Meaghan Rath on “Hawaii Five-O”) and added a few significant regular roles for 2018-19 (Saraj Sahrma on “God Friended Me,” Tim Kang on “Magnum P.I.”). Although there are now more combined regulars and recurring roles on CBS (49) than any other network, the quality of the roles are not as strong overall as those on ABC (37 combined) and some of the regulars (e.g., “Hawaii Five-O”) are barely seen.

Massively missed opportunities continue to plague all three of the network’s “NCIS” series. There are no APA regulars on “NCIS,” “NCIS: Los Angeles” or “NCIS: New Orleans,” and only 1 recurring APA in “NCIS: LA,” a series set in an area that is over 15% APA.) CBS once again gets a B-.

*Unscripted:* CBS really shined in this area due partly to the enormous increase in Asian nationals as judges and talent on the show “World’s Best.” Though the APAMC is generally more interested in Asian American inclusion, the network’s grade improves from C- to C+.

*Writers/Producers:* While the combined number of writers and/or producers jumped from 17 to 23, there was only 1 APA producer apiece for both of executive producer Peter Lenkov’s “Hawaii Five-O” and “Magnum P.I.” and no known APA writers. CBS’s grade remains a C+.

*Directors:* CBS had almost as many directors as ABC (7% to 7.5%), but CBS hired APA directors for only one comedy (“Young Sheldon”) and one director for “Hawaii 5-O” for the second season in a row, despite being asked repeatedly to use more APA directors for a series set in a state whose APA population is 60%. The network’s grade remains a B+.

*Development:* While CBS heard a lot more APA comedy pitch’s during 2018-19 season than the previous one, it didn’t result in more buys (falling from 1.2% to 1.1%). Its grade remains a B.

*Commitment to Diversity* (pipeline programs): CBS’ Diversity Department is consistent and highly engaged with the community including its signature sketch comedy showcase. The network once again receives a B.

*Diversity Dept. Relationship:* CBS continues to present more and more easily understood data than other networks except when it combines APA with People of Color numbers—sometimes in the same sentence—in its comedy/drama pitches, specs and development data. That leads to numbers and percentages that don’t compare apples to apples. Its grade remains a B.

## **NBC**

*Actors:* Regulars went up from 11 to 12 (6% to 7.7%), largely because of 3 regular APA cast members of “I Feel Bad.” Although the series did not succeed, NBC should be praised for casting Sarayu Blue as the star of a series that included her Indian American extended family. Recurring jumped from 12 to 27, but this is inflated because the network’s data included actors who appeared in as few as 2 episodes rather than the proper definition of recurring, which is 3-6 appearances. There is 1 APA regular in “Chicago Med,” but APAs are not regulars on any of Dick Wolf’s other three shows: “Chicago Fire,” “Chicago PD” or “Law & Order SVU.”

On the positive side, NBC had 3 shows which featured 2 APA regulars or more (“The Good Place,” “Superstore” and “I Feel Bad”)—and each of these characters played a significant role in advancing the stories. Grade: C to C+.

*Unscripted:* Though the APAMC keeps asking for it, NBC refuses to report statistics on contestants on their shows, which they’d previously provided. The APAMC only knows that judges/hosts dipped from 2.5 (3.4%) to 3 (2.4%). The Coalition applauds the inclusion of magician Shin Lim, who won “America’s Got Talent: Champions,” and singer Kodi Lee, who won during the May-September 2019 Season 14 of “America’s Got Talent”: Grade: C to D+.

*Writers/producers:* The number of both writers (8 to 3) and producers (13 to 7) fell badly. Together, they dropped from 6.4% to 3.5%, and that included 2 writers and 2 producers from “I Feel Bad.” Notably, none of the 4 Dick Wolf shows employed Asian or Latino writers in the 2018-19 season. Fully 82% of all writers & producers on NBC shows in the 2018-19 season were White. Grade: B- to C, the network’s worst in this category since the 2009-10 season.

*Directors:* The number of unique APA directors improved from 7 to 10, and the number of episodes directed jumped from 10 (3%) to 16 (4.6%), meaning more directors were allowed to handle more than just one episode. Grade: C to C+.

*Development:* The Coalition asked for this information ahead of time, but NBC wouldn’t even provide any written information at the annual meeting. All we know is that Jee Young Han starred in the pilot “Like Magic” but that it was not picked up and we don’t know if the network had a deal with her. NBC drops a full grade from B- to C-.

*Commitment to Diversity (pipeline programs):* Although NBC has more and varied pipeline programs than the other networks—including an APA writer’s program and a sketch comedy development program with APAMC member group East West Players, APA inclusion in the Diverse Staff Writers Initiative, Directors Program and Casting Apprentice is weak. Grade: B- to C+.

*Diversity Dept. Relationship:* The APAMC had been requesting a separate meeting with the creative executives rather than a one-hour meeting shared with the other ethnic coalitions. This past year, NBC finally agreed to the separate meeting. The network also provided most of its data on a timely basis, but it continued to refuse to honor the definition of “recurring actor” and to offer written information on development and the current 2019-20 season. The network also withheld pipeline program data until the meeting itself, which previously had been provided ahead of time. Overall, NBC’s data presentation was even worse than last year’s poor showing. In recognition of some progress, the network’s grade was bumped up from C- to a C+.

## **FOX**

*Actors:* There were only 4 APA regulars (3%) and none regularly voicing any of the characters on the network’s many animated shows. And while Fox counted 20 APAs as recurring (8%), this was an inflated number that included actors who did not meet the actual definition of “recurring actor.” Grade: D+.

*Unscripted:* There were 3 regulars (9%): Ken Jeong and Nicole Scherzinger in “The Masked Singer” and Dominic d-Trix Sandoval in “So You Think You Can Dance.” In the 2018-19 season, “Singer” was the #1 show among 18-49-year-olds for all network shows, so the APA judges had a bigger impact than, say, Carrie Ann Inaba on the fading “Dancing with the Stars.”

However, we expected to see APAs making up more than 3% of all Fox contestants especially in shows like “So You Think You Can Dance” and the 4 cooking shows (“Master Chef,” etc.), which have historically had solid APA representation and even winners. Also, there were no

APAs as panelists or on specials including any of the awards shows or the New Year's Eve program. Grade: C+.

*Producers/Writers:* There were 16 APA producers (5%) and 8 writers (4%). Grade: C+.

*Directors:* Fox hired 10 unique APA directors (6%) to handle a total of 29 episodes. Three were allowed to direct at least two episodes in each season of "Family Guy." Here, the network gets its highest grade in any category: B.

*Development:* Fox failed to provide any information on development, so it gets an F/Incomplete.

*Commitment to Diversity (pipeline programs):* Because of the announced merger with Disney, many in the diversity department were let go or left. Fox's pipeline programs, which once were fairly robust, deteriorated. The network failed to maintain its commitments to the APAMC. Fox receives a D+.

*Diversity Dept. Relationship:* After a long period of non-responsiveness to APAMC's overtures to work with the network to improve its diversity and inclusion numbers, Fox finally began communicating with the Coalition. While we hope this is the beginning of a new attitude at Fox, the APAMC needs to see more progress. For example, although Fox diversity executives promised the APAMC a meeting with the network's creative executives in October, when the APAMC representatives arrived, they discovered it was only a meeting with the diversity department. And the data for the seven categories (initially promised to be presented before, and then immediately after, the meeting) didn't begin arriving until December—long past the deadline—after the APAMC kept asking for them. Also, Fox inflated its recurring actors' numbers by counting those who'd appeared in previous seasons, not 3-6 episodes in the current season. To reflect improved relations and the hope for more engagement going forward, Fox is rated a C-.

## **OBSERVATIONS ON THE CURRENT 2019-20 SEASON**

**ABC:** Tamlyn Tomita is no longer a regular character in a medical show ("The Good Doctor") taking place in San Jose (Asian population: 33%); and both "Fresh off the Boat" and "Marvel's Agents of SHIELD" were cancelled, taking 8 APA regulars—all meaningful characters—with them. There were no new APA regulars in the Fall. Only one APA appeared in the mid-season, on "For Life."

**CBS:** There is only one new APA regular on any of CBS's sitcoms ("Carol's Second Act"). Levy Tran, a nice mid-season addition to "MacGyver" last season, was officially promoted to regular status. And it was nice to see Yul Kwon—the first Asian American winner of "Survivor"—return for "Survivor: Winners At War."

**NBC:** The network deserves praise for "Sunnyside" with star/co-creator Kal Penn and 3 other APA regulars, but due to low ratings, it was moved online to nbc.com. Although mid-season replacement show "Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist" takes place at a high-tech firm in San

Francisco (where Asians comprise more than 1 out of 3 people), it has no APA regulars. This is a huge missed opportunity, especially in light of the large pool of extraordinary APA singer-actors available.

After years of lobbying the network to finally hire an Asian American cast member on “Saturday Night Live,” the show promoted writer Bowen Yang to featured player. Yang quickly made his mark portraying Presidential candidate Andrew Yang, a Chinese government official and just average Asian American folk. It must be acknowledged that SNL also hired Shane Gillis, who had made multiple racist, anti-Asian comments on various podcasts and in stand-up routines. While the hiring reveals major flaws in vetting, we are glad that the network listened to the APA community and fired Gillis.

There were 2 APA winners on two versions of “America’s Got Talent,” but guest host Jay Leno made another (unaired) “Koreans eating dogs” joke, which the APAMC had fought for 10 years to get him to stop and was only successful after going after his advertisers in 2012. NBC promised a full investigation into allegations former judge Gabrielle Union made against Leno and the show. (APAMC member organizations Media Action Network For Asian Americans and Asian Americans Advancing Justice—Asian American Justice Center chastised the comedian for his bizarre obsession with these jokes, while MANAA demanded the network cut all business ties with Leno.) But a report promised by late January has yet to be issued.

**FOX:** After 20 years of doing the accented voice of Kwik-E-Mart owner Apu on “The Simpsons,” Hank Azaria—aware of mounting pressure to stop his whitewashed portrayal—announced in January that he will no longer voice the character. While this is a welcome step, “The Simpsons” producers haven’t explained if they’ll hire a real Indian American to take over the role.

“After the mega success of ‘Crazy Rich Asians,’” says founding APAMC member Guy Aoki, “other Asian American projects have done well, including ‘Always Be My Maybe,’ ‘To All The Boys I’ve Loved Before,’ and ‘The Farewell.’ And the Korean drama ‘Parasite’ became the first international film to win the Oscar for Best Picture. We don’t want to lose momentum and want to remind Hollywood that what we learned from those successes still holds true: people of all races are interested in stories about Asian people and are willing to pay money to see them. We want the networks to re-commit to getting Asian American family shows back on the air, which people will gladly watch for free.”

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*The Asian Pacific American Media Coalition (APAMC) has been advocating for greater diversity and inclusion of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (APIs) in network television since 1999. It has agreements (Memoranda of Understanding, or MOUs) with ABC, CBS, FOX and NBC committing them to work to increase diversity on-screen and behind the camera. APAMC members include Asian Americans Advancing Justice—AAJC, East West Players, Japanese American Citizens League, Media Action Network for Asian Americans, National Coalition of Asian Pacific Americans, National Federation of Filipino American Associations, OCA—Asian Pacific American Advocates, Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund, and Visual Communications.*