



The Civic Engagement and Leadership Institute for Everyone

January 11, 2019

Mr. Kenichiro Yoshida
President & CEO
Sony Corporation
6-7-35 Kitashinagawa
Shinagawa, Tokyo 141-0001 Japan

“Personal and Strategic Communication”

Dear Mr. Yoshida:

I write in my capacity as the Founder and President of CELIE (the Civic Engagement and Leadership Institute for Everyone), a 501(c)(3) organization headquartered in Washington, DC. Recent conversations and concerns associated with the documentary “Surviving R. Kelly” motivated me to contact you and Mr. Robert Stringer, CEO Sony Music Entertainment, directly to implore you to take proactive steps to engage African American women and other women of color more robustly as advisors and contributors to your global enterprise.

I respectfully request an opportunity to meet with you or your designee to discuss ways to engage black women and other women of color (WOC) executives, leaders, business owners, students and consumers more constructively across your various divisions. Items to be discussed include: the establishment of a Women of Color Advisory Committee reporting directly to you, and that also will consult as needed with the various heads of each division. The appointment of the Advisory Committee will help to (1) ensure that you keep a proper finger on the pulse of an important market; (2) expand on your articulated diversity statements (3) provide input, insights, knowledge and perspectives that are culturally authentic and relevant to consumers and the enterprise. Additionally, I would like to discuss CELIE’s *XXTRA Special and Free* initiative for women and girls. The initiative includes the only online news and public affairs platform for WOC, and a high-potential talent scholarship and internship program.

As an attorney and advisor to board members, corporate executives and national leaders over the course of my career, I know leadership and corporate culture are directed/informed from the top. Thus, I take the bold step of contacting you directly. We live in extraordinary times that require bold action from thinkers and doers capable of scaling innovations that engage key consumers profoundly and indelibly.

Black women and other women of color spend a lot of money. Some of which enhances ROI for your company. Women of color represent an estimated eight out of ten women in the world. They soon will comprise a collective majority in the U.S. This group has a buying power of \$1 trillion and controls more than 80 cents for every dollar spent in their communities. Black women are so influential, a marketing term has evolved to capture the group’s essence, “black girl magic.” According to Nielsen,

Black women [are] trendsetters, brand loyalists and early adopters who care about projecting a positive self-image. They are playing an increasingly vital role in how all women see themselves and influencing mainstream culture across a number of areas, including fashion, beauty, television and music.

Nielsen -- African American Women: Our Science, Her Magic



The Civic Engagement and Leadership Institute for Everyone

Many of the products WOC buy for themselves their families are products created and sold by Sony, including PlayStation, other devices and music. In light of the Kelly controversy, it seems to me that your brand is missing an opportunity to bolster your credibility and reassure and engage an important consumer segment in the U.S. and globally. The issue of sexual assault and abuse are systemic and structural. The situation has reached a tipping point as we see from the #metoo, #timesup and related movements. In my various executive leadership roles over the years, I have mentored and encountered scores of women whose lives and psyches have been devastated by the trauma associated with sexual abuse and assault, many of whom were first subjected to sexual abuse as infants and children.

After watching the documentary, I wanted to know more about the record label where Kelly is signed. It took me to RCA, which then took me to Sony. In looking at your corporate social responsibility priorities, diversity statements and executive leadership team, I saw nothing that connects black women and other women of color (outside of those living in Japan), and the communities where they live to opportunities supported by your corporate brand.

Your website proudly asserts that “Sony creates and delivers more entertainment experience to more people than anyone else on earth.” This also means that people from all walks of life contribute to your bottom-line. Cross-cultural accountability and credibility are more important than ever. As you recently noted at the *Consumer Electronics Show*, the company’s position in the global marketplace is very different than it was two decades ago. And, I will add, so is the market relevance of WOC.

Yes. The allegations related to Kelly are serious. More troubling is that the story also reveals for public inspection elements of your business model that call-into question the nature of Sony’s corporate investment/deliberative/constructive engagement of WOC as corporate leaders, executives, employees, interns, vendors, and community partners. I do not believe the absence of such information or reference to programming relevant to black, Latina, Native and certain Asian women – a community from which significant revenue is derived - represent a maligned or intentional omission. The time to address it, however, clearly is now. In this regard, I look forward to meeting with you/members of your team to discuss the recommendations shared above.

Your timely consideration of this request is appreciated. Thank you. I look forward to hearing from your office.

Sincerely,

Anita R. Estell

Anita R. Estell
Founder & President

cc: Mr. Robert Stringer
CEO Sony Music Entertainment