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WHAT’S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE? : DR. AMANDA COLES SHINES A LIGHT ON GENDER INEQUALITIES FACING WOMEN DIRECTORS IN CANADA

TORONTO, ON (September 7, 2016) -- Canadian Unions for Equality on Screen (CUES) has identified causes and solutions in a new report by Dr. Amanda Coles on the persistent gender inequalities that exist in Canada’s film and television industry. The report, entitled “What’s wrong with this picture? Directors and gender inequality in the Canadian screen-based production industry,” is a follow up to CUES’s inaugural Focus on Women report in 2013.

The report is based on the findings from a study conducted by Dr. Amanda Coles that delved beyond the statistics – as the numbers have not budged over the last three years – to determine the “why” behind this inequality. Dr. Coles interviewed directors who work, live and witness this reality every day in Canada.

“The under-representation of women in the director’s chair is not a consequence of women not wanting to direct, or a lack of training or talent. It’s a result of everyday and institutional sexism, and that’s a problem female directors can’t solve on their own,” said Dr. Amanda Coles. “The ability to create an industry built on diversity, inclusivity, representation and belonging rests entirely with industry gatekeepers and decision makers. It is an issue of major economic and socio-cultural importance that requires swift and meaningful industry-wide action.”

“The budget-challenged Canadian screen sector will win not on generating look-alike productions, but on specificity of voice,” said Tim Southam, National President of the Directors Guild of Canada. “Anyone who believes that the director’s unique voice is a critical part of a production’s identity is bound to believe in opening our screens to Canada’s brilliant diversity of voices.”

“Dr. Coles’s astute and frank analysis leads us to a world of practical solutions. The status quo is old school. We want the new school – where we embrace women as directors and key decision-makers in our industry both in front of and behind the camera,” said Ferne Downey, ACTRA National President and one of the CUES founders. “The will to embrace industry-wide action can manifest in very concrete ways – when you want it to.”

Dr. Coles found that women report having to work harder and perform at a consistently higher standard; a project’s financial risk assessment is not gender-neutral even though there is no evidence to support gender discrimination as a useful risk-management tool in film and television production; stereotypes prevail that position male directors as being visionary and creative and female directors as demanding and difficult; and a rigid hierarchical work-model still drives the operations of independent film and television production in Canada.
The future does not, however, have to be bleak. Dr. Coles also provided solutions for change but noted that they require an industry-wide effort:

- Adopt gender equality as a core principle in policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation for the Canadian screen-based production industry;
- Recognize that the implementation of equality and diversity practice is good for business;
- Address implicit bias across the Canadian screen-based production industry by prioritizing inclusivity and diversity as core industry values;
- Stakeholders from across the industry, including regulatory and funding bodies and public institutions, record diversity metrics and report annually on the degree to which public funds support storytelling by under-represented communities.

For an overview of the study's findings, please see the attached backgrounder. To read the study in full, please visit cueonscreen.ca.

**About Dr. Amanda Coles**
Amanda Coles is a Canadian scholar. She is the Head of the Master of Arts and Cultural Management program at the University of Melbourne, a Co-Researcher with the Interuniversity Research Centre on Globalization and Work (CRIMT) in Montreal, Canada, and an Affiliate Researcher with the Centre for People, Organisation and Work (CPOW) at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia. Her research on cultural labour and Canadian politics has been published in leading international journals, including the International Journal of Cultural Policy and Cultural Trends, and in the Canadian Cultural Observatory policy research branch. Amanda also consults on a range of labour market and policy issues for the screen-based industries.

**About CUES**
Canadian Unions for Equality on Screen was founded in 2012 by a group of union and guild representatives with the goal of achieving gender equality in the production of screen-based media by raising awareness of inequality issues and generating discussion within the industry. Working in partnership with academics and other industry organizations, the group collects and analyzes data to better understand the opportunities and challenges women face in the screen-based production industry, and develops recommendations and tools to help increase the number of women at all levels of production.

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