



**OWN AND SEEHER ANNOUNCE  
GROUNDBREAKING REPRESENTATION GUIDE TO HELP THE  
ADVERTISING AND CREATIVE COMMUNITY MORE AUTHENTICALLY  
REPRESENT BLACK WOMEN IN MEDIA**

**The First-of-its-kind #WriteHerRight “Black Female Characters: Authentic Representation and Storytelling Guide” is Available Today**

**Guide Features Insights From Influential OWN Creative Talent as well as SeeHer and OWN Executive Leadership**

Los Angeles, CA - In 2019, OWN, the leading network for Black women, and the Association of National Advertisers’ (ANA) SeeHer movement, founded to increase authentic portrayals of women and girls in marketing, media, advertising and entertainment, partnered to encourage brands to apply an intersectional lens and help more Black women see themselves authentically reflected in content. Today, SeeHer and OWN announced the first-of-its-kind #WriteHerRight “Black Female Characters: Authentic Representation and Storytelling Guide,” which is the first co-developed resource from the partnership.

Designed to provide creative teams in advertising and entertainment with thoughtful ways to reflect Black women more accurately in media, the Guide features key questions and insights to illuminate the immense opportunity that lies in authentic representation of Black women and help empower storytellers to become more aware of potential blind spots and unconscious biases. The Guide also highlights the importance of investing in Black female talent at every level, including behind-the-camera, to ensure accurate reflections of Black women by fostering nuanced depictions of Black women in media, eliminating stereotypes.

“The stories we tell matter and play a vital role towards creating a more equitable society. This guide provides an actionable roadmap for creating authentic representation of Black women in media,” said Nadine Karp McHugh, president, ANA’s SeeHer. “The urgency and imperative of doing more to address the unique challenges that Black women face, which is related to how they are portrayed in advertising and entertainment, has grown exponentially since the partnership was announced in 2019.”

"Storytelling is a powerful tool that can inspire more Black women and girls to embrace the limitless potential they possess within themselves," added Dr. Knatokie Ford, SeeHer Executive Advisor who spearheads #WriteHerRight. "It is imperative that critical moments are converted into momentum to catalyze meaningful and lasting change in how Black women are portrayed. Media bears immense potential to shift culture in non-trivial

ways by mitigating bias that perpetuates mistreatment, injustice, inequities, and invisibility.”

“Now more than ever it is critical for content to authentically reflect the people it serves, especially women and in particular, Black women,” said Sheereen Russell, group vice president, ad sales/client partnerships/inclusive engagement, OWN. “Brands spend billions of dollars to influence thought and behavior and imagine the power of those brands dedicating a portion of their spend to reflect Black stories and people. Its more than selling a product or service, its about creating a meaningful connection and imprint to shift the cultural narrative. OWN is committed to working with SeeHer to help the creative community enact the important changes we need to see in our industry.”

“Gone are the days of one-size-fits-all. We want to feel seen and we want products and brands that serve our needs with transparency and choice, without being held to the narrow standard of ‘normal,’ a damaging descriptor that we are working to eliminate,” said Esi Eggleston Bracey, executive vice president and chief operating officer NA beauty and personal care, Unilever. “OWN and Unilever have partnered for years on key initiatives that serve our shared vision, including the launch of the CROWN Act, legislation designed to prevent discrimination based on hair texture or style. This new guide for marketers from SeeHer and OWN further illustrates the opportunity and potential to create truly inclusive offerings for underserved audiences.”

The Guide has several questions for storytellers to ask that fall into two main categories, which delineate between storylines and Black female character attributes that align with authentic representation opposed to perpetuating harmful stereotypes.

**Examples of key “Affirmation and Inspiration” questions for storytellers to ask include:**

- Does the story include a **Black woman** in a **meaningful role**?
- Does the story incorporate an **intersectional** view of the Black female character’s lived experience based on the multiple dimensions of her identity (e.g. race or ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, socioeconomic status)?
- Does the story underscore the **humanity** of **Black women** by incorporating themes that are central to the human experience?

**Examples of key “Pitfalls and Misconceptions” questions for storytellers to ask include:**

- Is the primary Black female character a **sidekick** or **best friend** to a white protagonist, and accordingly lacks a storyline of her own?
- Does the incorporation of a **social justice theme** make Black female audience members feel burdened more than seen?
- Does the story overtly or subtly perpetuate **colorism** – prejudice or discrimination against individuals with a dark skin tone?

The Guide was developed by ANA's SeeHer through a unique process that incorporated evidence from literature reviews on content analysis, OWN original research, and surveys of OWN's visionary talent who masterfully convey the beautiful complexities and intricacies of Black women's stories. Key contributors from OWN's leading talent include Paul Garnes (head of physical production for Array Filmworks and executive producer of OWN's "Queen Sugar" and "Cherish the Day"), Dee Harris-Lawrence (showrunner/executive producer of the Peabody award-winning "David Makes Man" and "All Rise"), Tina Lifford (actress "Queen Sugar"), Cheryl Dunye (director "Queen Sugar," "David Makes Man," "Delilah," "Love Is \_\_\_"), and actress/comedian Kym Whitley ("Raising Whitley," "Girlfriends Check In"). Executive leadership from the ANA's SeeHer and OWN also provided input. Drawing from the creative expertise of OWN's storytellers to devise an in-depth series of thought-provoking questions is a novel approach that lends to the Guide serving as a creative challenge with actionable insights. As brands continue to embrace their social responsibility to see and reflect the experiences of all consumers, particularly those who have been historically marginalized, the Guide serves as a robust resource to support efforts to leverage brand power to rewrite and reimagine the American story—where Black life is portrayed with deep humanity and care.

### **Clips from 'Reflecting Black Women in 2020 and Beyond'**

In August 2020, OWN and SeeHer hosted a groundbreaking virtual conversation that explored how to create impact in key aspects of the storytelling process in order to develop more authentic Black female characters. The conversation highlighted the importance of empowering talent who bring these characters to life, and listening to the insights of key production experts.

Tina Lifford - Respect the Black Audience | See Her | Oprah Winfrey Network

Link to view: <https://youtu.be/E5Aw5Z9TXXE>

Embed code: <iframe type="text/html" width="560" height="315"

src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/E5Aw5Z9TXXE" frameborder="0"></iframe>

Kym Whitley – Hire Black Talent In Front of And Behind The Camera | See Her | Oprah Winfrey Network

Link to view: [https://youtu.be/dzv9R\\_rs\\_Is](https://youtu.be/dzv9R_rs_Is)

Embed Code: <iframe type="text/html" width="560" height="315"

src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/dzv9R\_rs\_Is" frameborder="0"></iframe>

Dee Harris-Lawrence - Marketers Should Be Specific | See Her | Oprah Winfrey Network

Link to view: <https://youtu.be/VBJT8cBsS4A>

Embed Code: <iframe type="text/html" width="560" height="315"

src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/VBJT8cBsS4A" frameborder="0"></iframe>

### **About OWN + SeeHer**

In 2019, OWN announced a partnership with the ANA's SeeHer to encourage brands to apply an intersectional lens in ads, media and entertainment and help more Black women see themselves authentically reflected in content. Among the partnership's goals are the creation of custom content, collaboration on industry events, and development of tools to drive change. Brands have an urgent social responsibility to see and reflect the

experiences of all consumers, and OWN and SeeHer encourage adding a new objective to all campaigns, leveraging brand power to rewrite and reimagine the American story—where Black life is portrayed with deep humanity and care.

### **About #WriteHerRight**

The ANA's SeeHer launched #WriteHerRight in 2018 to support storytellers' efforts to integrate more authentic depictions of women into their work. Through #WriteHerRight, SeeHer produced a storytelling guide (originally termed a "tip sheet") to facilitate conversation about gender equality in media with showrunners, actors, and network executives by bringing effective, story-building language and tools into the writers' rooms. With SeeHer's deepening emphasis on intersectionality, the guide co-developed with OWN is the first custom #WriteHerRight storytelling guide.

Please go to <https://www.seeher.com/> to learn more.

### **Social Media:**

SeeHer: @SeeHerOfficial (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)

OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network: @OWNTV (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)

### **About OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network**

OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network is the first and only network named for, and inspired by, a single iconic leader. Oprah Winfrey's heart and creative instincts inform the brand and the magnetism of the channel. OWN is a leading destination for premium scripted and unscripted programming from today's most innovative storytellers. OWN connects with its audience wherever they are, inspiring conversation among a global community of like-minded viewers on social media and beyond. Launched on January 1, 2011, OWN is a joint venture between Harpo, Inc. and Discovery, Inc. The venture also includes the award-winning digital platform [Oprah.com](http://Oprah.com). Access OWN anytime, anywhere on [WatchOWN.tv](http://WatchOWN.tv) or across mobile devices and connected TVs. For more information, please visit [www.oprah.com/own](http://www.oprah.com/own) and <https://press.discovery.com/us/own/>.

### **About SeeHer**

Despite strides made in recent years to accurately portray women and girls in media, unconscious bias persists throughout advertising and entertainment. The average age, race, body type, and other aspects of women depicted in media today still represents only a small fraction of the female population. Led by the Association of National Advertisers (ANA), SeeHer is a collective of marketers, media organizations and industry influencers committed to creating advertising and supporting content that portrays women and girls as they really are. It launched in June 2016 in partnership with The Female Quotient (The FQ) in Washington DC at the United State of Women. To help marketers benchmark success, the group developed Gender Equality Measure® (GEM®), the first research methodology that quantifies gender bias in ads and programming. GEM® shows that content portraying females accurately dramatically increases both purchase intent and brand reputation. In 2017 GEM® won the prestigious ESOMAR Research Effectiveness Award. The methodology quickly became the industry standard, which led to a global rollout in 2018. In 2019, the movement expanded into new verticals: sports (SeeHer In

Sports) and music (SeeHer Hear Her). Visit [SeeHer.com](http://SeeHer.com) and follow @SeeHerOfficial on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

### **About Association of National Advertisers**

The ANA (Association of National Advertisers)'s mission is to drive growth for marketing professionals, for brands and businesses, and for the industry. Growth is foundational for all participants in the ecosystem. The ANA seeks to align those interests by leveraging the 12-point ANA Growth Agenda, which has been endorsed and embraced by the ANA Board of Directors and the Global CMO Growth Council. The ANA's membership consists of nearly 1,600 domestic and international companies, including almost 1,000 client-side marketers and nonprofit fundraisers and 600 marketing solutions providers (data science and technology companies, ad agencies, publishers, media companies, suppliers, and vendors). Collectively, ANA member companies represent 20,000 brands, engage 50,000 industry professionals, and invest more than \$400 billion in marketing and advertising annually.

### Media Contact:

Kristin Silady  
OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network  
[Kristin\\_silady@own.tv](mailto:Kristin_silady@own.tv)