

Dear Fellow Members:

I have had the pleasure of talking with Hispanic members of our guild. While talking with them I noticed that many have the idea that SAG is a paternalistic entity. Many of our members believe that the union is a source of employment and that the union has a magic wand that solves all our problems. This is not the case.

If you are waiting for SAG to rescue you from your economic and career problems, I wish you good luck and patience because you're going to be waiting a long time. The only one that can solve those problems is you. How can you solve them? By acting with integrity as a union actor. This means acting responsibly and respecting the contract that you signed when you joined the union. It means having an active presence in the union by participating in meetings, events, and volunteering where necessary, including phone banks. The union can only extend its force to its members when the members themselves participate and involve themselves directly and actively in union activities.

You don't have time to participate with us? The truth is you do have time. Not only do you have time, but it is the most valuable investment of time that you can make. It's of vital importance that you understand this fundamental principle: your union is the sum of a common effort. The union is your best friend. Please don't disrespect or ignore it. You are SAG. Without you, there's no union. Without our presence, industry corporate players have more strength over us. We can have the same strength as they, but only when we act as a unit in solidarity, without selfishness or fear.

I would like my peers to understand the great power we have to negotiate with the producers. We can activate our strength only when we act in a non-egotistical way, when we consider that our actions affect others. When individual union members seek to protect their short term-interests and have no vision for the future, the links in our union chain become weaker day by day.

Possibly I'm the only one that does not have my feet on the ground and dreams that one day the members of our union will not find themselves forced to decide between working union or non-union. Nonetheless, dreams do come true if you wish. One way of attaining it is a willingness to remain united in a common front before the problems that affect and weaken our union strength.

I think we should question our behavior as members of a union and not shy away from the uncomfortable questions. We can leave behind fears and accept our responsibility to say "no" to the non-union job offers. I ask myself *"Why it is that only a few of us honor the agreement that we signed when we joined SAG?"* We are all feeling the crush of financial responsibility, but Rule No. 1 of our contract states that: *You may not agree to work for any producer who is not signatory to the applicable SAG contract. This provision applies world-wide.*

I want to be clear the enemies are not the producers nor the ad agencies or any particular actor's employer. We need them for employment in the same way that they need union talent to fulfill their requirements. I think we can be our own worst enemy, but at the same time we have the potential of being our best ally.

When you promote yourself as non-union talent, it is difficult to break out of that category. Your value as an actor erodes and the value of your talent decreases every time you accept non-union work. To negotiate better salaries without the union's support is almost impossible. Our union will have the strength to represent you in the same measure that we participate in union activities that strengthen the links that unite us.

In Unity,

Hector Herrera  
Hollywood Division Member  
National Spanish Language Media Task Force