Star Wars, Diversity and What Should You Do About It?

Okay, I'll admit it. I fell in line with millions around the world this weekend to see Star Wars: The Force Awakens. And I have to agree with the critics, it's not just a good movie but a terrific film; one of the few of recent vintage where I've seen audiences clap enthusiastically at the end.

It's worth your two hours (?) and your 12 bucks (?)... spring for "3D" unless you're part of the 1% of the population who never saw the earlier movies in the saga. If so, you might be hopelessly confused.

But given what I do, what thrilled me even more than enjoying time away from holiday madness was the incredible diversity of the cast. From "over-forty" actors like Carrie Fisher and Harrison Ford to two new heroes - one a young woman and one African American - to a talented Latin fighter pilot and a blizzard of diverse crowd scenes with women, Asians, droids and extraterrestrials, this movie packs a subconscious punch. The movie boasts characters from every corner of the galaxy.

Finally, young and old movie goers alike can see themselves represented on the big screen.

https://www.google.com/search?q=star+wars+diversity&biw=1600&bih=775&tbnm=isch&tbo=u&sourc=univsa=X&sqi=2&ved=0ahUKEwjfhpfljP_JAhWJ6IMKHZmcAJgQsAQIGw#imgrc=63xbdTBzQt3DpM

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Diversity has been a big issue in Hollywood for years, but frequently, there's been much talk and little action. Kudos to director J.J. Abrams for putting his money where his mouth is and intentionally casting a diverse group of superb players.

**Truly, in this film, *the force awakens*, revealing that practicing diversity and inclusion is not just the right thing to do, but is a great business strategy.**

Women, such as Jennifer Lawrence [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/14/arts/jennifer-lawrence-speaks-out-against-gender-pay-inequality.html?_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/14/arts/jennifer-lawrence-speaks-out-against-gender-pay-inequality.html?_r=0) and Geena Davis, have voiced concerns about the gender pay gap in Hollywood and have raised the issue of whether women should be blamed for being poor negotiators or whether something more sinister is at work. While I have no inside information on the pay scale for *Star Wars*, I do know that the first step in any inclusion program is getting the right players on the field.

I'm also convinced that it's a smart business strategy. I have no doubt that the huge success of the new *Star Wars* - $1 billion so far and counting - is its appeal to audiences from every background. While young white males have traditionally been the biggest science fiction fans, people of all ages and backgrounds have flocked to the recent installments - grandmothers as well as young girls.

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