

Artificial Intelligence Study Comments Submission

from Joanna Ke

I work in the entertainment industry as an actor, writer, and producer. Unregulated Artificial Intelligence in the entertainment industry has the potential to completely eliminate the majority of jobs in Hollywood, which will have devastating effects on the economy and the world's cultural progress.

Specifically, if actors are replaced with AI, there will no longer be a need for makeup artists, costume designers, casting directors, lighting, production design, craft services, stunt performers and coordinators, painters, locations, gaffers, prop masters, etc. Every single person that has a job on a physical set will no longer be needed. The vendors that service all of them will also not be needed.

These jobs have skills and arts that have been passed down for generations. If unregulated AI is allowed to flourish in the entertainment industry, the art of acting, designing costumes, creating makeup and hair for a character, lighting, designing and creating a set, directing actors, all of it will stop being learned and improved upon by new generations.

As an example, stunt performers are a vital part of Hollywood with a specific skill set. They are part of the magic of movie-making that has captivated audiences since the inception of visual storytelling. Studios could capture a performer executing a stunt, and then, with unregulated AI, just re-use that footage in any film or TV show for eternity. This stunt performer no longer has a source of income, and future stunt performers will also be affected with a lack of jobs. A stunt coordinator who would normally oversee stunt performers on a set are also no longer needed in that scenario. The art of stunt work would not be passed down or learned as it is now, because it will no longer be needed.

With no guard rails around AI or consequences for the unauthorized ingestion of the hard work of artists of the past in generative AI models, studios that want to cut costs have the ability to purge the bulk of workers on their payroll, save for a few employees, to create television shows and films. That means thousands of workers around the world will no longer have a job or will have significantly less work.

This will impact every aspect of society from the economy to the television shows and films that we are influenced by, to programs that our children learn from, to societal progress that moves forward from the morals and values of our society that are passed down through the stories we see on screen and created by thousands of human workers.

Below, I have included an article I wrote that was originally published on Medium and republished by Mixed Asian Media within the last month. It is titled "*Why AI Replacing Actors Is A Threat To Diversity And Cultural Progress.*" It speaks to the ways that unregulated AI replacing actors could affect all of us and how it is already happening.

As an example, [Disney has already started replacing background artists with AI](#). Below is a screenshot from the Disney+ film "*Prom Pact*", which shows computer generated background actors in the stands of a basketball game. These are jobs and opportunities that were taken away from people and replaced by computers. It is worth noting that Disney's computer-generated AI avatars are designed to look like women and people of color. These are groups of people that already do not have as many opportunities and receive less compensation for the same amount of work as their white male counterparts in our society. This continuing practice in Hollywood will devastate further progress for diverse peoples.



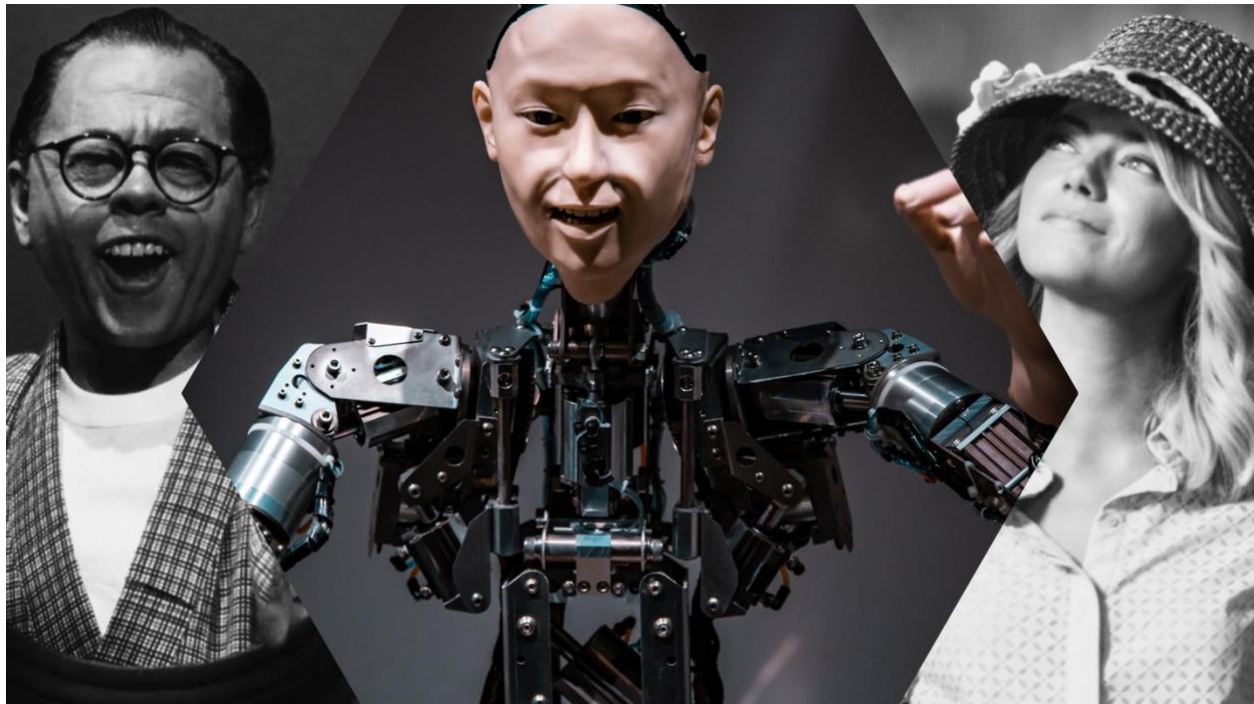


I implore you to create regulations that require explicit transparency when AI is used in any capacity in any industry. Mandatory transparency about what works that are fed into Generative AI models is also needed, with requirement of consent and compensation to those who created those works. Otherwise, people and companies could profit off of the hard work of others and copyright laws can be misinterpreted and freely broken.

In the entertainment industry, it is vital that actors and every person that could possibly appear on screen retain their right to consent and compensation over the use of their image, voice, and performance so that studios are not allowed to eliminate entire work forces and render performers unemployable, without a way to make money since their image and voice is owned by an entity. Every person, but especially actors and performers, need legal protection and discourse for the unauthorized use of their image and voice.

Please see my article below for further comments and links to sources.

Thank you,
Joanna Ke



[Actor Mickey Rooney as Mr. Yunioshi in “Breakfast at Tiffany’s” and actress Emma Stone as Allison Ng in “Aloha” flank a robot with the face of an Asian man]

Why AI Replacing Actors Is A Threat To Diversity and Cultural Progress

by Joanna Ke

"Terminator" tried to warn us about artificial intelligence, but it got one thing wrong. It's actors and writers that have been standing on the front lines between us and the degradation of our humanity. I'm a SAG-AFTRA actor on strike. Like many of my fellow artists, I see the writing on the wall when it comes to [unregulated AI and the future](#).

Imagine that a [trailblazing talent like Margaret Cho](#), whose work has paved the way for Asian stories on screen, AAPI comedians, and queer visibility, is just starting out as a background actor. Because of a proposed Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) [policy](#) to only pay background artists for half a day's work to scan the actor's body and use it however the studio wants for eternity, this budding talent would not be able to thrive because they have no say in how their body or voice is used for the entirety of their life.

And because they don't receive any pay for the perpetual use of their image, might leave acting just to make ends meet. Even if they did "make it," a studio already owns the rights to their image. Brilliant artists and significant contributions to our culture would be lost.

This is one of the many reasons why actors are walking the picket lines, and it's just the beginning of how actors being replaced with AI could affect our society.

INAUTHENTIC REPRESENTATION

I'm mixed race. My mother is Taiwanese, and my father is Irish/Polish. I once worked with a film director that insisted that I OPEN MY EYES WIDE so that they appeared bigger on screen. I remember doing a take, the director being unhappy with it. Then, they directed me to open my eyes as WIDE as I could and just do the same thing as the previous take.

While it felt awkward to me, according to the director, I nailed it! They showed me the footage so that I could see how I 'looked better' with my eyes wider, then proceeded to give me the ignorant racist advice that I should always try to do that any time I was on camera.

If actors are replaced with unregulated AI and directors, producers, or studios are given free rein to shape the appearance of our avatars, I shudder to consider the damage to diversity and authentic representation we will witness. If this director had the opportunity to do whatever they wanted to my appearance without my consent, I wouldn't look mixed race. I would look how they *approved* of me looking.

Representation is important. America Ferrera, who stars in the mega-hit "Barbie", [told the LA Times](#), "I don't really remember the Barbie world ever resonating with me. I imagine that's because I didn't feel very represented or reflected by it. Never in a million years did I imagine that I would be part of a Barbie movie. I was the little girl who didn't see myself in the mainstream culture around me, and I know how important it is to feel seen."

THE ILLUSION OF DIVERSITY

As AI avatars encroach upon acting, it's worth considering how we could be exposed to "diverse" avatars that don't really show what a real mixed race, Black, Latino, Asian, LGBTQ+, Indigenous, neurodiverse, non-binary, Jewish, Muslim, person with disabilities, or plus size individual looks like. What kind of an effect will that have on future generations that will be introduced to other cultures in this way or compare themselves to an avatar that's just someone's idea for what they *should* look like?

Sinead Bovell, a futurist that speaks about [the ethics of computer-generated avatars](#), predicted a future where businesses might create diverse avatars so that they can invest in what she calls the "illusion of diversity" without anyone on the payroll actually being diverse.

This is already happening in other industries with CGI-generated 'supermodel' [Shudu Gram](#), who appears Black and identifies as female - but was created by a white man that profits off of her. [Levi's recently announced](#) they're going down a similar path with AI generated "diverse models." In the entertainment world, a production company experimenting with AI showcased their ability to [change a white actor's race](#) to Black or Asian.



With AI at their fingertips, Hollywood studios that are already [notorious for excluding diverse cast, crew](#), and [executives](#) will have the capability to completely eliminate diverse actors from their employ but still profit off of them.

REINFORCING STEREOTYPES, RACISM, AND MISOGYNY FROM THE PAST

Like most industries, the entertainment industry has been dominated by white men. In my over 15 years of acting, I've only ever gotten to audition for a role that was specifically written for a mixed Asian character once.

As a former script reader that worked in development and acquisitions for almost a decade, I provided feedback on screenplays being considered for production or starting production. I was so frustrated by the vapid female characters I saw in scripts that resulted in the roles I auditioned for that I created a [Twitter account](#) devoted to informing others of it.

The recently released results of the [USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative](#), a study that analyzes diversity in front of and behind the camera from 2007 to 2022, blatantly displays how Hollywood's efforts for diversity have been abysmal. Unregulated AI will devastate further progress.

Writer/Director/Producer Justine Bateman, who holds a degree in computer science, [explained on "TV's Top 5" podcast that](#), "Generative AI can only function if you feed it a bunch of material. In the film business, it constitutes our past work. Otherwise, it's just an empty blender. [It] can't do anything on its own. ... So if you keep recycling what we've got from the past, you have nothing new. Nothing new will ever be generated."

Justine, a former actor, was an AI consultant to SAG-AFTRA during negotiations with the AMPTP before actors went on strike. Once actors hit the picket lines, [she shared](#) that the studios wanted to feed their AI generative models with 100 years of past acting performances without consent from any of the actors.

If the studios have their way, the ideal images and perceptions of emotions that AI will spit out will come from the works of people that have come before it - predominantly straight white men - and we will get more of that. We won't experience fresh stories from different perspectives or new ideas. Diversity will be crushed under the weight of AI regurgitating the past rather than Hollywood continuing to pave a new frontier with authentic representation and real diversity.

ERASING REAL BODIES AND FALSIFYING EMOTIONS

[Whitewashing has always been an issue in Hollywood](#). So has the pressure on women to fit their bodies and faces into impossible standards, like never visibly aging. Our society is then influenced by these ideas. Kate Winslet made headlines for not allowing production to get rid of her wrinkles or to modify her stomach in "[Mare of Easttown](#)."

But with unregulated AI, they have control over more than just appearance. They can control an AI avatar's performance itself.

Years ago, Jessica Alba was vocal about her experience with a director that wanted her to "cry pretty," which made her want to [quit the business altogether](#). She's not alone. I had this direction given to me as well. My forehead apparently wrinkled too much for a director's liking when I was sad in a scene. On another project, I was given the inhuman direction to cry out of only one eye - just a single tear. Oh, and it needed to be the left eye.

On set, as an actor, I can stand up for the humanity of my character and give creative input and insight into their emotional world. Bringing authenticity to each moment is my job. Without actors, there is no one tasked with serving the heart of a character - be that on screen and in voice acting.

While decision makers would be able to shape the emotional performance of an AI avatar, computers will also give us their robotic interpretations of what feelings are like. Depression, grief, loneliness, ecstasy, and joy will all be seen through a mechanical lens.

AI can never replicate the experience of being human like an actor can because it is devoid of the fire of aliveness that comes from being fully present with rich life experience and a deep emotional history only a real person has. The catharsis you would normally feel from watching an actor feeling on screen will no longer be possible. Our brains and hearts will grapple with the new experience of computer-generated emotions we're presented with.

We're more aware now of the detriment that [unattainable body images](#) and [unrealistic beauty standards](#) bring to us, but we have yet to foray into the world of AI doctored emotions combined with those falsities and how it affects our mental well-being.

HOW THE DEHUMANIZATION OF ACTORS AFFECTS YOU

If SAG-AFTRA actors lose their ability to have consent over how their bodies and voices are used, it's not just actors that will face the unrealistic images and feelings that come from the limited minds of those in power and the limited capabilities of AI. You and me, the audience, will witness and be affected by unreal people in unreal bodies, emoting in a way a human does not emote.

My late acting mentor, casting director [Sam Christensen](#), taught us that actors are in a noble profession because we help people feel they are not alone. Behind every great acting performance is purposeful empathy from the actor to portray the reality of a character's emotional world. Acting is an act of courageous empathy.

To replace actors with AI avatars is to actively eliminate empathy from the films and TV shows that we watch every day and the movies and programs that our children learn from. This is a profound loss of humanity that I fear will create a dearth of compassion in our society, a precious commodity that we already have too little of.

Actors foster emotional intelligence and offer emotional fulfillment. That fire of aliveness burns brightly in [iconic unscripted moments](#), like Julia Roberts' delightful laugh when Richard Gere snaps the jewelry box in "Pretty Woman," the truffle shuffle in "The Goonies", Leonardo DiCaprio full of rage in "Django Unchained" after he accidentally cut his hand, Kristofer Hivju as Tormund grinning at Gwendoline Christie's Brienne in "Game of Thrones," or Catherine O'Hara saying anything in Moira Rose's distinct accent in "Schitt's Creek."

During the pandemic, television became a resource that we leaned on to help us get through one of the most devastating events of our lifetimes. Historically, cinema has [helped us cope with difficult times](#). What are the implications of continually exposing ourselves and our children to an absence of empathy through film and TV devoid of true humanity? To me, it spells out adverse consequences to our mental health.

THE PATH FORWARD

For diversity and inclusion to prosper in the entertainment industry, for the legacy of empathy and compassion to endure in the craft of acting, and for the inimitable human fire of aliveness to endure in cinema and television, it is imperative for SAG-AFTRA actors on strike to prevail with the basic human right, not just to [fair pay](#), but to consent and compensation for the use of their images, bodies, and voices. To stand behind them is to support the progress of women, people of color, and all those that have been historically marginalized.

Right now, and especially when we see the advent of AI avatars on our screens, it's vital to support diverse writers, filmmakers, and actors. Watch their shows and movies. Share their work on social media. [Studios pay attention to your posts](#), and it helps diverse artists cultivate their careers. Use your economic voice to tell the studios what you want to see by buying a ticket for or renting films with underrepresented talent and real actors.

Demand AI transparency and regulation in Hollywood so that important artistic contributions to our culture are not lost, for the essential ability to discern what is real from what is not, and so the illusion of diversity doesn't result in those in power making money off of the backs of people of color without any compensation to them.

The consequences of AI replacing actors with no guardrails has far-reaching worldwide effects to our societal evolution that cannot be quantified, but each of us has the power

to speak up and stand up for the future we want to see so that artificial intelligence is used as a tool to accelerate human advancement rather than a way for racism, misogyny, bigotry, and Hollywood corporate greed to unwittingly debilitate cultural progress.

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