

AFTRA

American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, AFL-CIO

November 9, 2007

Mona Mangan, Executive Director
Writers Guild of America, East
555 West 57th Street
New York, NY 10019

RE: Ellen DeGeneres

Dear Mona:

I was absolutely stunned to see a WGAE news release sent via e-mail a few moments ago from Sherrie Goldman declaring that the WGAE feels that AFTRA member Ellen DeGeneres is "not welcome in NY".

As you know, AFTRA members such as Ms. DeGeneres who are working under the AFTRA Network TV Code (which covers the Ellen DeGeneres Show) are legally required by the no-strike clause of that contract to report to work and perform their AFTRA-covered responsibilities. Ms. DeGeneres, along with thousands of entertainment industry workers represented by AFTRA and other unions who are bound by similar no-strike clauses, are also reporting to work as legally required.

The news release alleges that Ms. DeGeneres has performed writing duties normally performed by a WGA writer but for the current strike. As you are well aware, AFTRA has instructed its members not to perform struck work. Whether the services Ms. DeGeneres performed constitutes struck work is something we should determine. But at a minimum, the WGA should have contacted AFTRA in advance so we could determine the facts before such a public attack on one of our members is made.

Mona, members of AFTRA have been on the line and struggling to provide their support to WGA members despite the stony silence of the WGAW in returning AFTRA's calls to offer help. As you know, AFTRA members in particular – who work in variety, talk, comedy, and in all likelihood daytime serials if the strike continues – have been among the first affected, since they have been put out of work as AFTRA-covered programs have been among the first to shut down. Still, regardless of the institutional political constraints of WGAW, AFTRA members are showing their union solidarity with their brothers and sisters in the WGAW and WGAE who are standing tall in their struggle to achieve a fair contract – as all union members should.

If WGAE had concerns about the activities of this AFTRA member, we cannot fathom why we did not receive so much as a courtesy heads up to discuss the situation and see what we could do to work together in support WGA's members. Considering that you and I were together on a conference call less than 24 hours ago to discuss how AFTRA and other unions in the AFL-CIO could assist WGAE at this time, this is especially distressing. An AFTRA member was made the target of an ad hominem attack in a news release without any of the communication between us consistent with professional and inter-union courtesy. At a time when all unions should be standing together, this stunning breach of basic inter-union communication is the kind of misstep that threatens to frustrate the solidarity of organized labor on a cause that we should all stand together, and stand up, for.

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I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kim Roberts Hedgpeth". The signature is stylized with several loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Kim Roberts Hedgpeth
National Executive Director