

August 12, 1981

The Honorable Willie Brown, Speaker
State Assembly
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Brown:

I understand that Ms. Loni Ding Welsh has been nominated to serve as a member of the California Public Broadcasting Commission. My various involvements with Ms. Ding over the last four years in a variety of public broadcasting contexts lead me to believe that she is more than eminently qualified for such a position.

I have worked with Ms. Ding in the following capacities: as Program Director and Executive Producer of the Bean Sprouts series which was funded during my tenure as ESAA-TV Program Manager with the U.S. Office of Education; as a member of the ESAA-TV competitive review panels in 1977 and 1978; as a fellow member of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's Minority Task Force 1977-79; and as a Guest Lecturer at the Newhouse School last year.

Ms. Ding is one of the most perceptive and sensitive people whom I have come to know in some twenty-five years of broadcasting-related work. The Bean Sprouts series pioneered techniques in electronic field production. It proved to be one of the most effective and delightful series of the 27 that were funded under ESAA-TV. Aside from its high level of quality, it is particularly notable for the degree to which Ms. Ding actually involved the Chinese-American community in its conception, development and production. (Such promises of "community involvement" were frequently made, but seldom accomplished.)

On the CPB Task Force, Ms. Ding proved herself to be one of the most critical and analytical members of the group. She was among those most instrumental in shaping a landmark report which showed the alarming extent to which racism in programming and employment has become a hallmark of the public broadcasting establishment.

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As an ESAA-TV proposal evaluator, Ms. Ding was one of the two or three most outstanding panelists out of some 65 we employed over a 7-year period. Her ratings and comments proved particularly incisive.

As a guest lecturer here at the Newhouse School, Ms. Ding provided our graduate students with a great deal of understanding of the problems which minority communities face with regard to their treatment by both the commercial and public television systems together with some wonderfully rich stories of the very effective ways in which she has dealt with some of these problems in her own work.


There are those of us who have been concerned over the last few years with the tendency of public broadcasting to become more and more concerned with elite audiences--best defined as those predominantly upper-middle-class white viewers who support pledge and auction week efforts. I know from numerous conversations with Loni Ding that this lack of concern by public broadcasting with the needs of minorities and the poor is among her major concerns. A voice such as hers on the State Commission would prove a most valuable addition in helping to keep public TV more of a truly public medium in the widest meaning of that term.

I sincerely hope that Ms. Ding's nomination will be approved.

Sincerely,

Dave Berkman
Assistant Dean for
Telecommunications/Film

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 bcc Ms. Loni Ding