

## **To the Writers, Creators, and Leaders of the Film and Television Industry,**

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The American Cleft Palate Craniofacial Association (ACPA) and all of the undersigned urge you to end the damaging and persistent practice of creating characters with visible facial differences as villains, outcasts, and evil.

Recently published photos of an actress on the set of the film "Werwulf" - showing her wearing a prosthetic cleft lip or scar - have once again triggered comments calling the look "ugly" and "scary."

The public response is sadly predictable, and highlights the long-standing pattern the film industry continues to reinforce: that facial differences signal something abnormal, frightening, or broken.

For the millions of people living with facial differences, this stereotype is not simply offensive—it contributes to real-world stigma, bullying, and isolation.

Cleft lip and palate are among the most common birth differences in the United States, with 1 in every 1000 babies born with a cleft lip alone.

### **Our Request to the Film and Television Industry:**

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We are not asking for facial differences to be hidden. We are asking for responsible representation, no different than other changes made over the past decade.

#### **We urge you to:**

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- 1)** Stop using real-world facial differences such as scars, burns, and clefts, as visual shorthand for villainy, instability, or danger.
- 2)** Cast actors with real facial differences in a wider variety of roles—heroes, friends, leaders, love interests.
- 3)** Avoid prosthetic facial differences on actors and actresses when the only purpose is to insinuate something is "wrong" with them.
- 4)** Consult individuals with lived experience, as well as clinical and advocacy experts, when developing characters with facial differences.
- 5)** Create characters whose facial differences are not their defining trait, and certainly not a symbol of evil or brokenness.

Accurate, humane representation is within your power. Children and adults with facial differences deserve stories that reflect their full humanity, not stereotypes that diminish it.

### **With urgency, the undersigned,**

American Cleft Palate Craniofacial Association  
Smile Train  
myFace  
Face Equality International  
Children's Craniofacial Association  
Transforming Cleft  
American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research  
CLEFT - Bridging the Gap  
Moebius Syndrome Foundation  
European Cleft Organization  
FACES: The National Craniofacial Association  
Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors  
Happy Faces Association  
Caring Matters Now  
Changing Faces

