

Speech: Does British television and film reflect the diversity of our modern nation?

Thank you for inviting me to speak at this event to celebrate the second anniversary of Channel Four's 360 Diversity initiative.

It's been fascinating to hear Charles talk about Channel 4's great work in this area.

I look forward to hearing more about your Year of Disability, where I know you have met and in many cases exceeded your commitments.

For example, the doubling in the number of disabled people in top shows on screen. And off screen, the increase in apprenticeships offered to disabled people.

I know the real reason most of you are here is to listen to the brilliant Riz Ahmed – so I won't keep you for too long.

I am here to talk about diversity.

There's no better place to start than to pay tribute to this year's eventual and deserved Oscar winner Moonlight.

Moonlight told the story of a gay black man, but it didn't speak just to a gay black audience. It spoke to anyone who's tried to find a place in the world, and a person to stand beside them in it, to anyone who's struggled.

And it hasn't only been a critical success – it has done brilliant business at the box office too.

Black stories, gay stories, the whole gamut of stories should be told not because it's the right thing to do but because they appeal to us all.

Tell a good story and people will pay to watch and maybe even hand you a shiny statuette if you tell it really well – once they've opened the right envelope.

That's what Moonlight's win teaches us.

On becoming Minister of State for Digital and Culture I made expanding access and diversity one of my top priorities.

It is a central tenet of this Government that everyone, from every background, of every colour and identity, from every part of the country should have equal chance to succeed. That means an equal chance to access arts and culture.

TV brings culture – high-brow, middle-brow, resolutely low-brow – into homes across the land.

And just as TV audiences are wide and diverse, the industry should be too.

While there is already a push for greater diversity on-screen, and we will continue to support that, it must be matched by a similar drive behind the scenes.

Among writers, directors, commissioners and executives.

Television, this proudly demotic medium, should reflect our richly diverse society not only on screen but behind the scenes. In the production offices and commissioning meetings. It shouldn't be an echo chamber for one type of person.

I was delighted to launch Diamond in August, and I am sure it will go from strength to strength.

So ask yourself this:

New technology and distribution is making it easier to break through. But does commissioning reflect the diversity of our modern nation?

Strides are being made on gender, disability, sexual identity, and ethnicity.

But what of social diversity too?

I'm delighted by progress. I'm glad there's a growing consensus that diversity is here to stay. But I'm determined there's more to be done.

Soon I will be holding a 'diversity and social mobility' forum at the world-famous Abbey Road studios. For the first time as a Department, we will be bringing together stakeholders from right across culture, media and sport.

We will celebrate success, and set out what more we can do.

As your Minister, I am determined that by working with many of you in this room, we can make real progress in this area. And ultimately by working together we will reach our goal: of a country that works for everyone, where each and every person has the chance to reach their potential.