



## General Hospital Fan Bases Join Forces To Be Heard

For months many fans of ABC's General Hospital have been voicing their concerns and displeasure with what was once the network's flagship soap opera through emails and letters to soap magazines and ABC/Disney executives, and in online postings on various General Hospital and ABC Message Boards. The common themes among the complaints center around character destruction, unbalanced storylines, promotion of excessive immoral and detrimental ideals and behaviors, underutilization of long-term characters in favor of bringing on new characters or bringing back old characters for short 'stunt' periods, and the complete void of any long-term romantic pairings and familial interactions. As their voices have not been heeded, members of several fan bases have joined forces to organize the SOS/Save Our Soap! General Hospital Campaign. This campaign, kicking off across North America in June, is a joint effort by those fans to make an appeal to ABC/Disney to help save what was once their favorite soap opera. As ratings continue to surpass all time lows almost monthly, these fans fear that General Hospital will suffer the same fate that the long-running soap opera Guiding Light has recently--cancellation.

What do the viewers/fans of General Hospital want? They want character-driven storylines, character growth and development, historical integrity and respect for the characters, balance of light and dark emotive story lines among favorite characters, more focus on families, rootable couples that provide positive moral examples, less sleaze, more romance, a sense of integrity in storytelling, and an overall enjoyable escape.

At a time when the country is experiencing one of its highest rates of unemployment and more people are at home looking for entertainment to provide them an escape, the expectation would be that soap opera ratings would reap some benefit from this increase in home audience. Sadly, the ratings for General Hospital in 2009 have not shown that to be the case, having surpassed the all-time low ratings' numbers previously recorded. "What could be the cause? What is different?" are some of the questions being asked.

**The SOS/Save Our Soap! General Hospital Campaign is attempting to answer those questions by identifying the causes and voicing them to those in charge of making changes.** One long time fan of General Hospital notes one reason she is so disheartened with the show is that many of the viable couples that were together or were working their way back together when ratings were higher, are now split apart and share no screen-time together. General Hospital is being written as if these characters have never met, though their shared, rich histories are what attracted viewers to the show in the first place. In addition, the characters who were members of these couples are now being written so far from their usual personalities that they have become almost unrecognizable. Viewers are left wondering why management is doing this in a period of declining ratings, which is patronizing to the fans of so many characters.

Other causes for the declining viewership are that the integrity of several characters is being sacrificed to showcase one or two actors/actresses or characters. Fan favorites are being placed on the backburner and/or dropped to recurring status while new, unproven characters are given significantly more airtime. As quoted by one fan, "New characters suddenly thrown onto the canvas often disrupt storylines because their very existence disrespects the rich history of the show." History is literally being rewritten to allow for the addition of these new characters.

Strong, independent female characters are given little airtime and are often put down or attacked by other characters, while sleazy, manipulative female characters are showcased and held in high regard and rewarded for their repulsive behavior. Since women are the backbone of General Hospital's viewership, many want to see women succeed, whether it be in their home, the oval office or in the corner office of corporate America. The constant degradation of strong, independent, and professional female characters, whether they be full-time heads of households, professional doctors, nurses or business executives, is wearing thin on female viewers. In general there are few examples and no balance in the treatment of positive female role models on the show.

In addition, lead male characters are being written inconsistently and without regard for their history. Throughout the past several months, one lead male character's point-of-view of his wife and their relationship, or lack of one, changes on a week to week basis, making it difficult, if not impossible to care about or even understand or follow the storyline. Another lead male is written to be the surrogate father for his nephew, showcasing his love of children, while at the same time totally ignoring his own son. As evidenced by the falling ratings, and fan-initiated black-outs, the cumulative effect of these many issues has caused many viewers to simply tune out.

Throughout the month of June, fans of Sonny and Kate, Jason and Elizabeth, Patrick and Robin, and Jax and Carly, are joining forces through the SOS/Save Our Soap! General Hospital Campaign to express their concerns. These large fan bases feel that General Hospital is not only worth saving but also believe ratings can be brought back up by utilizing and emphasizing these four compelling, romantic, and dynamic couples more. Thousands of fans from the United States and across North America are sending an SOS to ABC/Disney executives Robert Iger, Anne Sweeney, Zenia Mucha, Brian Frons, Robert Guza and Jill Farren Phelps.

Over 12,000 postcards with this plea are being mailed, and ratings information is being FAXed, to ABC/Disney executives in an effort to save General Hospital. **The fans involved in this campaign want General Hospital to be a success, and are thereby hoping that ABC/Disney will listen to its loyal customers and take steps to improve its product.** The goal of this campaign is to work with ABC/Disney to win back viewers and restore GH to the position it once held. It's clear to these fans of General Hospital that, if the issues identified above are addressed and positive changes are made, General Hospital would not only stay afloat, but rise to the top again!

For further information regarding the SOS/Save Our Soap! General Hospital Campaign, please contact Dana L. Meyer or Kecia K. Picard at [saveoursoapgh@gmail.com](mailto:saveoursoapgh@gmail.com).