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FCC  
COMMISSIONER



## BLACKS AND THE TV RATINGS GAME

Recently, the A.C. Nielsen Service made what it call a "Pure" survey of a Black American TV audience, centering its focus in representative areas: the Nation's Capitol which is 76 percent black, and in Chicago and Detroit, both of which have large black populations.

It was a first of its kind and some interesting revelations resulted from it. But more about that later.

For years blacks and other minorities asked "Nielsen who"? when the name of this electronics media sampling service was mentioned. In other words, Nielsen (and other such service) agents in minority communities were almost as plentiful as Eskimos in the Sahara Desert. It was, and indeed, is, hard if not impossible to find a Black or a Spanish-surnamed, or an Indian or an Oriental American who has been interviewed by this or any other sampling agency.

Given the fact that these agencies base their findings on such a small number of people--1,400 out of 200 million--one is hard put to discover anyone even in the majority community who has been included in such a survey.

Many people, and especially minorities, are skeptical of the ratings game that results from such samplings. And when I was queried by some members of the press after Nielsen announced its sampling results in Black Washington, D.C., I said it was my gut feeling that this random sampling was inaccurate because I felt it did not include enough people. But I hastened to say that I could not rationally analyze the situation because I lacked both skill and expertise as a mathematician or statistician to do so.

I felt, however that even though the sampling of black households was probably not representative, the fact that the effort was finally made by Nielsen represented a significant shifting in power relationships between the hitherto ignored minority community and the audience measuring agency whose sampling findings can spell life or death to a television or radio program.

Nielsen's black audience survey covered an eight-week period from January 10 through March 6. I won't go into the numbers represented in the so-called "share rating", but suffice it to say that Nielsen found, as could have been predicted, that black audiences in D.C., Chicago and Detroit, tuned in heavily to Sanford and Son starring comedian Redd Foxx, with slightly less viewing of Soul Train. Flip Wilson's variety show pulled well as did Fat Albert comedy cartoon on Saturday mornings. Blacks also tuned in heavily to weekend college basketball and pro NBA basketball shows. It is significant plunges (by more than 30 rating points) when Nielsen sampled mixed (black and white) communities.

For the information of those who may not know, the rating services are dominated largely by three agencies: the A.C. Nielsen, which uses a patented device inserted into a set to measure audiences viewing; the American Research Bureau (ARB) which sends a diary to its viewers to be filled in, and Pulse, Inc., which deals exclusively in radio and uses the personal interview to attain its sampling results.

There are others, but their share of the market is minimal. Because the FCC seems to have, at the very least, a tangle interest in the ratings game, it has been suggested that the public interest might best be served if it conducted the audience samplings, taking the services away from commercial agencies.

I am opposed to this plan, just as I am opposed to a companion suggestion that the U.S. Census Bureau with its built-in expertise of long standing in making national surveys, should take over the sampling. It is true the Census Bureau does have the experience, but like the FCC, it is a federal agency, and I think the heavy hand of government does not belong in this sensitive private arena.

There are many flaws in the surveying techniques of the service agencies and one of the biggest heretofore, was its bland indifference to the inclusion of minority samplings in its conclusions. but a federal government take over won't be cureall.

Black Journal's Tony Brown and other leading Black communications figures have led the fight in this area, and they should be commended for it, because now Nielsen ratings service is beginning to respond.

## Boston's Black Community Has Varied Heritage

Black Bostonians have been around for more than 300 years and have amassed a history as varied and interesting as that of the city's other traditional ethnic groups. Ironically enough, much of that history has been a struggle with a liberal Boston social conscience which has supported social change elsewhere but has resisted advancement at home.

Today's visitors to Boston can best explore the history of Boston's black community by walking the Black Heritage Trail which winds through Beacon Hill.

The first black Bostonians arrived in 1638 aboard the ship Desire, from Barbados. The Puritans paid for them through the sale of "troublesome Indians," and by 1705 there were well over 400 slaves in Boston, most of whom were house servants and apprentice craftsmen. Others were responsible for transporting farm produce from outlying areas.

During the American Revolution, black Bostonians were active on both the American and British sides. Numerous locals, including Peter Salem, distinguished themselves at Bunker Hill. According to a newspaper account of the day, "As the British Major John Pitcairn leaned over the ramparts shouting 'The day is ours,' he was felled by a musket fired by a colored patriot, Peter Salem of Framingham."

One important effect of the Revolution was that it sounded the death-knell of the slave system in Massachusetts. However, Negroes began to go to court in the Northern colonies as early as 1766 to sue for their freedom. A number of them were successful and there is no known instance of a black man who sued for his freedom, failing to receive it. Such a procedure was slow and expensive, however, and few blacks could afford it.

This method was soon replaced by petitioning the legislatures of the respective states. In Massachusetts in 1733, many slaves requested relief from the Great and General Court. "We have no property! We have no wives! We have no children! No city! No country!" their petition read. After appointing a committee to consider the petition, the assembly tabled it, a favorite political device for delaying sticky issues.

With the outbreak of war there came a new series of petitions from slaves in the North and slavery was finally abolished in the Commonwealth by a Massachusetts Supreme Court ruling in 1783.

The first free black settlement in Boston was at the foot of Copp's Hill in the North End and was known as "New Guinea." More than 1000 colonial Boston blacks, including Prince Hall, founder of the Black Masons, are buried in the Copp's Hill Burying Ground.

## Push Expo Salutes The Family

CHICAGO-Thousands of visitors from across the nation will participate in the largest Black-sponsored event in the U.S. when PUSH EXPO '75 opens its doors at Chicago's International Amphitheatre, Wed., Sept. 24 through Sun., Sept. 28, for the 7th Annual Operation PUSH Business and Cultural Trade Exposition.

Focusing on the critical effect of the current economic condition on the American family, Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, National President, Operation PUSH, designated "Save the Family" as the theme of this year's Expo. Through a series of meetings and workshops, national business, labor, government and media leaders will seek ways to alleviate financial pressures on the family and assure the economic survival of the wage earner and the business entrepreneur.

The primary purpose of the five-day exposition is to provide an opportunity to showcase Black businesses. Joint ventures between Black and White firms resulting in industrial payrolls in the inner city are one of the most valuable by-products of Expo, according to Celious Henderson, Expo General Chairman.

Over 500 exhibitors from almost every state will display their products and services at the Amphitheatre. "The exposition educates the consumer about these products and demonstrates to White businesses what Black businesses can supply," Mr. Henderson said. Major Black firms, allied corporations, government agencies, civic and educational organizations will occupy 200,000 square feet of exhibit space, while dozens of small Black retailers will sell their wares in the colorful Bazaar market area.

The best known names in show business have made appearances at PUSH Expo a tradition. This year's line-up, still in formation stage, includes Roberta Flack, Richard Pryor, Dick Clark and his "American Bandstand" show, Don Cornelius and his "Soul Train" show, and Wolfman Jack with a Saturday matinee "Midnight Special". A tribute to Julian "Cannonball" Adderley will be presented on Saturday evening.

Also planned are entertainment programs created especially for school children, and a "Celebration in Song" gospel music scheduled for Sunday afternoon.

Dominating the entrance to the exposition hall, a cultural display, dramatizing those factors which have influenced the growth of the family in Western civilization, will depict the "Save the Family" theme.

Last year, 400,000 people, from across the U.S., Canada, Virgin Islands, and from as far away as the Soviet Union came together at Expo to view the exhibits, to communicate with one another, and to celebrate current Black business and cultural accomplishments.

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