

**Benjamin L. Hooks**  
FCC



You do not have to be blessed with 20-20 hindsight vision -- only a reasonably observant mind -- to know that until only a few years ago, the image that television projected of blacks and women was uniformly bad, particularly of blacks.

The first 50 years of commercial radio broadcasting dating from about 1920 and the first 20 years of commercial television broadcasting, represent such an ugly smudge on this nation's moral escutcheon that it is taking some furious scrubbing today just to effect a dull, uneven shine.

For decades the only image America had of black folks on its radio and TV airways was that of the "Beulahs", goodnatured but simpleminded maids; "Amos n' Sndy", a combination of shrewd coniving simpletons that lived in a perpetual state of muddled but frenzied buffoonery.

I'm not saying that many of the programs involving both Beulah and Amos and Andy and the Kingfish and Miz Blue and Caledonia and all the rest were not at times evocative of chuckles or outright sidesplitting mirth.

What I am saying is that this was the totality of black life that commercial radio and TV would deal with. The other bits and pieces that help flesh out our humanity were lost somewhere between the cracks of yawning indifference and persistent prejudice.

This is what the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights essentially was saying in its recently released 181-page report that has been so soundly thumped by the critics.

The CRC declared TV, its principal target, is a world in which the programming is geared to white males who present strong, mature and virile images, persons who exercise control over their own lives, people who are problem solving and sensible.

Minorities and women on the other hand, the report states, generally are portrayed in dependent and subservient roles and minorities appear primarily in ethnic and racial settings or as tokens in all white shows. It is, says the report, a world of "stereotypes."

It is also "a window dressing" world in which minorities and women appear as actors or as on-camera newsmen -- but a world in which the decisions are made and the power held by white males. The report went on to say that TV is a world where women and minorities rarely make news, where newsmakers are white males, usually government officials or public figures.

This exclusion, the report, entitled "Window Dressing On The Set: Women and Minorities in Television," suggest that women and minorities "may not matter." The report roundly criticizes the Federal Communications Commission for permitting this "stereotyped" programming and discriminatory employment practices that lead to this kind of programming.

Well, I would like to praise this report, generally, while taking exceptions to some of its features.

I do not believe the FCC should have the power to censor programming; but I do agree that the television networks are guilty of racial and sexual stereotyping. While the FCC has not done all it should and could, I believe it has done more than any other major federal regulatory agency (for example it is the only major institution of its kind to put into effect a strong equal employment opportunity program, establishing both an in-house office to deal with EEO problems within the agency and an external EEO unit to guide the industries the FCC regulates).

I am proud of the role I played in helping to establish these offices and much of the programs and policies they dispense. The FCC, then should be criticized for things it has not done which I praised for those that have been initiated in true public interest.

The FCC should have control over networks to the same extent that it has regulatory powers over individual stations that comprise the networks.

The way I believe the FCC can deal much more effectively with the delicate issue of programming. For it is a truism that TV/radio programming is like the computer: if nothing but garbage goes in, only garbage comes out. If the networks are forced to hire and promote on an equitable basis, the mix of minority, ethnic and women ideas with those of the prevailing white male, a much more dynamic and democratic ideal will prevail and that is the best kind of censorship. (By the way, I am happy that a recent federal appeals court ruling has declared that only broadcasters with fewer than five employees are exempt from FCC's EEO guidelines. The ruling strikes down a 1976 FCC order expanding the exemption to include stations with fewer than 10 employees, a decision I strongly disagreed with and wrote a dissenting opinion against).

**NCCJ**

The National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ) met on Friday evening, Sept. 2, 1977 in the Eldorado Room of the Frontier Hotel for a dinner and discussion meeting.

Some of those in attendance included Bishop Norman F. McFarland, Reno, of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Nevada; Bishop Wesley Frensdorf of the Episcopal Diocese of Nevada; James Gibson, Regional Representative of the Council of Twelve, LDS; Reverend Jerome Blankenship, past president of the Council of Churches and a member of the Board of NCCJ; Rabbi Phillip Shnairson; and the Reverend Marion Bennett of our own Westside.

Also in attendance were Judge and Mrs. Ward; Judge Mendoza; Judge Guy; Father White; Judge George; and members of the media.

Fred Lewis, President of NCCJ, was the M.C., and explained that the Conference was opening this meeting to the media and the leaders of all the major religious faiths in order to have ideas given to the Board of NCCJ for any upcoming programs.

The first PUBLIC announcement was made that Alex Haley, author of ROOTS is to be at a meeting of NCCJ at the Convention Center Nov. 19, 1977. We are looking forward to hearing Mr. Haley.

The basic idea put before the Conference concerned the need to establish a Trend of Brotherhood. As stated by one person in attendance, "We are here because of brotherhood, and are of one family and all are brothers and sisters, as we have but ONE Father."

The other main idea is not only to have Brotherhood Week annually, but every week! Each week one person would be chosen to be the one recognized as outstanding.

Bishop McFarland suggested a FAMILY of the Year Award, going to an outstanding family consisting of children, with the parents.

The media was asked for their opinions, and I know all the media present agreed that they would cooperate 100% in any program decided upon.

Jim Gibson, of the LDS Church, remarked that their Family Night was the success it is because the Church says "The Family is the key of Society".

As the Media is the message bearer of this program, keep watching this paper for any future announcements.

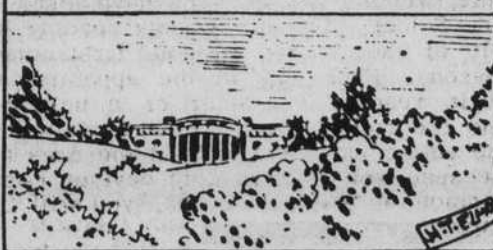
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