

Washington pushes tolerance in TV spot

LOS ANGELES (AP) — “Grey’s Anatomy” star Isaiah Washington, making amends for his use of an anti-gay slur, cautions in a public service announcement that “words have power” to hurt or heal.

Washington’s filmed message stemmed from a January meeting with officials from the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network or GLSEN, and the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation or GLAAD.

The actor provoked a furor by using the epithet backstage at the Golden Globe Awards in January while denying he’d used it previously against cast mate T.R. Knight.

Washington’s “willingness to do something to address the hurt and harm he may have caused has to be respected,” said Eliza Byard, GLSEN deputy executive director. “Millions of people who might not have thought about the impact of this language may take a moment to reflect upon it. I hope viewers will take a moment to reflect on the power of words, particularly when it comes to the lives of young people and their experience at school.”

In his meeting with the civil rights group, Washington apologized and agreed to

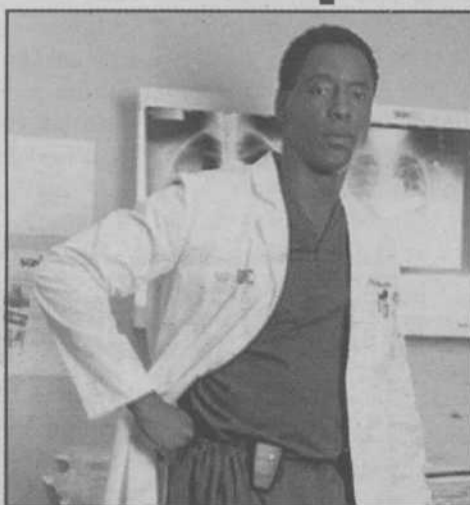
help fight bias against those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, the groups said.

His public service announcement, produced by ABC, urges tolerance for all.

“Words have power. The power to express love, happiness and joy. They also have the power to heal,” Washington said in the message. “When you use words that demean a person because of their sexual orientation, race or gender, you send a message of hate. ... We have the power to heal and change the world by the words we use.”

The actor’s future with “Grey’s Anatomy” is uncertain. In the season finale, his character, Dr. Preston Burke, was seen calling off his wedding and moving out of their apartment.

A spokesman for Washington has expressed confidence that the actor will return to the show, but ABC said contract negotiations are, as yet, unresolved.



Best-rated gospel special of all time put out on DVD

Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

Before you totally dismiss BET as a disgraceful wasteland of gangsta videos, it might be time to reconsider the sepia network, since it is apparently making an effort to upgrade its programming. Exhibit A is “Celebration of Gospel,” a faith-based special which originally aired on Jan. 28.

The show is a mix of rousing spirituals and spoken word readings, including performances by such Grammy-winning gospel greats as Yolanda Adams, Fred Hammond (“This Is the Day”), Kirk Franklin (“Imagine Me”) and Pastor Shirley Caesar, on one hand, and by pop icons like Fantasia and Loretta Devine

(“The Lord’s Prayer”) on the other.

Among the luminaries making appearances are Blair Underwood, Gabrielle Union, Quincy Jones, Keke Palmer, Lou Gossett Jr. and Rob Brown, while Tyler Perry is the beneficiary of a tribute for bringing his religious-themed brand of theater to the masses. But the real reason to check out this concert flick, staged at the famed Orpheum Theater in Los Angeles, is for its sanctified soundtrack, filled with soul-stirring songs likely to get Christian couch potatoes stomping on their feet as if they’re choir members of a Baptist congregation who’ve caught the spirit on Sunday morning. Can I get an Amen?

Very good (3 stars). Unrated.

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Hosted by
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Documentary

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The producers, who include former Reagan administration official Frank Gaffney Jr., claimed the film was held up due to liberal bias. Since then, the film has been in limbo.

The issue escalated when eight members of Congress — seven Republicans and one Democrat — wrote a letter to CPB asking that PBS air the film or allow it to be released elsewhere.

The CPB, having spent \$675,000 on the documentary, preferred that it be aired on a public television station. Following the agreement with Oregon Public Broadcasting, CPB President and CEO Patricia Harrison said the agreement “fulfills our responsibility to the taxpayer.”

Steve Bass, president and CEO of Oregon Public Broadcasting, has seen the documentary, which is about moderate Muslims who have felt pressured or threatened by extremists.

“I don’t see much controversy built into the film,” he said. “It’s much more about the fact that the documentary hasn’t been seen.”

As for the quality?

“I would say it is by no means the best documentary ever produced, and it is by no means the worst,” he said.

Bass said the music was “a little over the top” and that it ultimately could have been more effective in making its points.

Regarding the controversy, the “best way to get out of that box” was to air it and let the audience decide.

Bass said the airings will be accompanied by a panel discussion. He said it probably will be broadcast in late summer.

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