LOOKING THROUGH THE GLASS DARKLY: THE BLACK IMAGE IN AMERICAN T.V., THE FIRST TWO DECADES

By

REBECCA RUTH MARKS

Bachelor of Arts

University of Oklahoma

Norman, Oklahoma

1982

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College
of the Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
July, 1985

Thesis
1985
M346l
cop.2

LOOKING THROUGH THE GLASS DARKLY: THE BLACK IMAGE
IN AMERICAN T.V., THE FIRST TWO DECADES

Thesis Approved:

William J. Rugg
Thesis Adviser

W. J. Ward

Philip E. Paulin

Norman N. Durham
Dean of Graduate College

1227933

PREFACE

In chronicling the development of the black image in television, I thank God who enabled me to benefit greatly from the Media Resource Center of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. A deeper debt is owed to Dr. William Rugg, whose patience in the early stages of the exploration of the topic and whose guidance throughout the research and writing were of inestimable value in both intellectual stimulation and morale building.

I would like to express my gratitude to Drs. Walter J. Ward and Philip E. Paulin for their constant support.

I would also like to thank Perla B. Ward for her valuable suggestions and Dr. Judy Marks Snelling for her advice, labor, and answers.

Finally, to my Dad I owe a debt that cannot be fully described or adequately repaid.

And to all who made the undertaking and completion of this manuscript possible, I express sincerest thanks.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter | Page

I. THE PROBLEM 1

Introduction 1
Statement of the Problem 3
Purpose of the Study 5
Significance of the Study 6
Limitations of the Study 6

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE 9

Books 9
Theses and Dissertations 11
Pamphlets and Reports 12
Magazines and Journals 16
Films 17

III. TWO DECADES IN HISTORY OF THE BLACK IMAGE 24

The Fifties 24
The Sixties 31

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS 49

Recommendations for Further Research 50

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY 53

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It has been stated by many different people at many different times that all mass media programming is really minority programming; there is no one "minority audience." The public that takes in mass communication is really made of many "minority publics," of different political, social, racial and educational backgrounds.[1] This concept of the "minority public" is certainly true in the case of television in the United States of America.

Almost anyone can have a TV, and certainly, almost anyone can view a TV. Yet, very few people can control what is broadcast over TV. The so-called control of the television viewer in reality is virtually no control at all, and the ability of the television viewer to express his dissatisfaction is extremely limited. He can switch channels, which is largely a choice between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. He can turn off his TV completely, or if he is really concerned, he can write a nasty letter to someone with authority in the programming department. Even with these limited alternatives, most viewers accept the majority of what they view, too etherized by institutionalized television programming to act on their complaints.

Perhaps this is why so many viewers are surprised by militant stands taken by groups and individuals toward general television programming. The fact that many of these complaints center around minority group images probably upsets the average TV viewer even more, but it is entirely under-

standable. Minority groups are driven to more positive action because, traditionally, television programming has not etherized them; it has offended them.[2] To be put to sleep by American TV is one thing, to be rudely shocked is quite another. For the black American, American television programs have been a shock and an insult, sometimes more subtle than obvious.[3]

Considering the "minority public" that watches TV, it doesn't seem understandable that a group as large and as visible as black Americans could be so mistreated by a major communications industry. From its inception, television spread more quickly to the poor and illiterate (largely black) than to the middle class (largely white).[4] Unlike earlier pretwentieth-century forms of communication, TV's audience was never limited or restricted. It followed in the footsteps of radio, as a means of communication that required no special skills or background to be understood.[5]

But it shares a trait common to twentieth century communications: to control it, one needs (1) sophisticated technical know-how, and (2) a large capital outlay. Anyone can watch TV, but very few can own, operate, and control a TV station. The people who possess know-how and capital, and the people who have the influence to bring them together in television programming, are largely white. So--television has traditionally failed the "minority public" in general, and the black American in particular!

To some people, white control of television is not the least bit noticeable. This is especially true for many whites, because the white world is the world related through most American mass communication, and is more "pervasive" than most whites realize.[6] But then, TV being merely

one of many other forms of mass media, and being a relatively new form, is simple reinforcing ideas and images set up by radio, film, and most U.S. publications. This leads us to the realization that "the common stereotypes of the society tend to be copies unconsciously in the mass media of communication."[7]

Statement of the Problem

Why do people stereotype? In their work on human behavior, Berelson and Steiner state that:

> There is a tendency in most human societies for people to prefer their own kind and to stereotype ethnic outgroups, especially lower status ones, in a negative fashion.[8]

The majority race usually will use stereotyping to help keep the other race down. Adams in his essay "In Interracial Marriage and Social Change," states that the superior race exploits the inferior

> ...by means of slavery, peonage, serfdom, trade or employment at low wages. In the beginning the exploitation may be carried on successfully through the superiority of knowledge, technique and organization.[9]

He goes on to say that if the exploited possesses equal privileges, some of the more able or fortunate will acquire the superior knowledge and technique of the exploiters and, profiting thereby, will rise to the higher economic status.[10] What better way is there to stop the exploited from getting the superiority of knowledge, technique and organization than by making the exploited look silly and futile, by making the exploited look funny and weak? What better way is there to keep a race down without a lot of bloodshed than by showing sex, alcoholism and drugs on them? What better way than by stereotyping them?[11]

Stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination feed on each other and this is how dominance is kept over the minority group.

> As a result of prejudice and discrimination, members of the minority group often suffer some deterioration of personality: self doubt, self hate, impulsive and superstitious behavior, resigned exploitation of inferior status, deviant behavior, family disturbance, mental illness.[12]

Thus, under these conditions some elements of the exploited race carry out the exact stereotypes that were placed upon them. The group which is exploited even stereotypes itself and the job is complete: "The stereotyping of ethnic groups tends to be quite similar across the society, among various social groups and even within the stereotyped group itself."[13]

Films, especially Hollywood movies, established a pattern for dealing with the black image in visual media. Claiming fear of Southern box office boycotts, Hollywood, in the first half of the century, dealt with black America as little as possible. When they did feature blacks, it was in blatantly stereotyped, romanticized roles and situations.[14] Or, as one writer puts it, black childhood was filled with tales of "the heartbreak of the mulatto, who rejected his blackness, and was accepted as white," or "the Uncle Tom/Gunga Din theme," where it was stressed that even though the hero/heroine was "a darkie," he or she had a "white heart," and gave full allegiance to the white patrons.[15] Hollywood's justification for such one-dimensional and slanted treatment of blacks has always been hard to prove. The South was not only a minority group itself, but a minority group that did not really support movies, no matter what the theme. In turn, Hollywood ignored the large urban ghetto audiences that did support movies.[16] But, in its "Golden Age," Hollywood had already decided how to handle the black man, and this decision, in turn, influenced radio and TV. At least during Hollywood's Golden Age there was a creditable source of movies for the black community -- independent "race

movies," produced in abandoned East Coast studios. But in time, being uneconomically unable to compete, they disappeared.[17]

There has never been any "race television," however, and television communication has always flowed from white to black -- hardly ever the opposite way. In the late '40's, the movies had opened up to anti-Fascist, social message films that introduced blacks as at least as "social problems."[18] But TV, then in its infancy, super-cautious of its appearance in people's living rooms, still embraced the older Hollywood ideas: entertainment ought not to comment on society, and blacks were "social problems."[19] If a black person wasn't a problem, then he was basically a "character role," and not much in demand as such.[20] But for the black person who knew himself to be neither a problem nor a specialized character, there were no alternative images. TV continued to reinforce racist ideas, while further destroying a meaningful self-image. The only "real people" the black viewer saw in dramas and comedies were synthetic whites, living out white roles, in white lives, totally removed from him, and fairly inaccessible.

Purpose of the Study

In light of the blacks' changing role in American society, an attempt to ascertain the evolution of the black in American television during a time when blacks were engaged actively in the struggle for an improved status in the United States appears appropriate. The purpose of this thesis is to historically examine how the mass media has used stereotyping as a method of exploitation of the black image in two decades of American television. Of necessity, the terms "Negro," "black," Afro-American" will be used interchangeably hereinafter, and the word "black" will not be

capitalized.

Significance of the Study

Some of the implications of the long-standing broadcasting practice of the 50's and 60's in depicting blacks in an abrasive or stereotypical way, or to grossly ignore them and their achievements is the significance of the study.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are due to the fact that the study is limited to blacks and two decades of the black image in American television, limitations are at hand. Since this work is concerned solely with the portrayal of the black, and characterizations of other ethnic groups by black actors and actresses will be excluded. No effort is made to determine the effects of the portrayals on the television audiences. The time span of this study will evolve around the decades of the 1950's and the 1960's.

ENDNOTES

[1]William L. Rivers and Wilbur Schramm, Responsibility in Mass Communication (New York, 1969), p. 197.

[2]"Along the NAACP Battlefront," Crisis , Vol. L, No. 5 (May 1983), p. 150.

[3]Ibid., p. 154.

[4]S.I. Hayakawa, "Television and the American Negro," Sight, Sound and Society, David M. White and Richard Everson, eds. (Boston, 1968), p. 70.

[5]Rivers and Schramm, p. 5.

[6]Ibid., p. 175.

[7]Bernard Berelson and Gary Steiner, Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings (Chicago, 1964), p. 500.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Romanzo Adams, "Interracial Marriage and Social Change in Race," Individual and Collective Behavior, Everett C. Hughes and Edgar T. Thompson, eds. (Glencoe, 1958), pp. 428-429.

[10]Ibid., p. 492.

[11]Adams, p. 492.

[12]Berelson and Steiner, p. 521.

[13]Ibid., p. 502.

[14]Thomas R. Cripps, "The Myth of the Southern Box Office --- A Factor in Racial Stereotyping in Amreican Movies, 1920-1940," The Black Experience in America, James C, Curtis and Lewis L, Gould, eds. (Austin, Texas, 1970), pp. 128-130.

[15] John O. Killens, "We Refuse to Look at Ourselves Through the Eyes of White America," Negro Protest Thought in the 20th Century, Francis L. Broderick and August Meier, eds. (New York, 1965), pp. 348-349.

[16] Ibid., p. 121.

[17] Ibid., p. 120.

[18] Ibid., p. 118.

[19] Ibid., p. 130.

[20] Richard Lemon, "Black Is the Color of TV's Newest Stars," Saturday Evening Post, Vol. 241 (Nov. 30, 1968), p. 44.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In the chapters which follow, this writer has attempted to trace the black image in American television over the decades of the 1950's and the 1960's. Precious little research has been done on this highly specialized topic. The scant and scattered literature pertinent to the black image in American television during the 50's and 60's seemed lacking in objective assessment. Critical reviews tend to be either to laudatory or too condemnatory, depending frequently upon whether the critic is black or white. There is a schism between black TV critics and white TV critics on the subject of black characterization in American TV. In question is the ability of white critics to evaluate TV portrayals of a black experience, alien to their own existence. The literature review will be divided into the categories of books, theses and dissertations, pamphlets and reports, magazines and journals, and films.

Books

The research on the black image in American TV dates back to Noble's _The Negro in Films_,[1] published in 1948 and reprinted in 1969, which is a major work on the subject. Noble, a British film critic, traced the experience of the black from the earliest silent films up to the motion pictures of the post-World War II period.

In 1950, V.J. Jerome, then chairman of the Communist Party's National Cultural Commission, authored The Negro in Hollywood Films,[2] a Marxist indictment of American films of the forties dealing with racial themes. Jerome believed that newly emerging film stereotypes would perpetuate the oppression of black people. Almost two decades later, this concept was to become part of a broader controversy.

Kracauer's "National Types as Hollywood Presents Them," in the book, Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America,[3] takes a look at the images of the mass media. If Kracauer's proposition that "images of 'in group' peoples surpass those of 'out-group' peoples in reliability" is true, then increased participation by blacks in all areas of the media could give them the power base to which Kracauer alludes.

Powdermaker looks at the black image problem of the fifties and the forties from a social stand in her book, Hollywood: The Dream Factory.[4] This work suggests that the stereotyping of the black image in the fifties and early sixties by the visual media is due to attitudes, attitudes stemming from the past which are slow to change. Powdermaker suggests that in a rapidly changing society such as ours, some attitudes borne out of a past situation continue under new conditions even when inappropriate.

Fletcher, in his largely autobiographical work, 100 Years of the Negro in Show Business,[5] notes that because the reformer forces got underway in Hollywood telling producers. directors and writers how to cast black people, that resulted in a lag in Negro employment in the late fifties.

More than fifty years ago, Dale alluded to the enormous power available to the motion picture industry in its characterization of ethnic

groups in The Content of Motion Pictures.[6]

Chalmer's Hooded Americanisms[7] suggests that during the early sixties, genuine efforts were made to represent more minorities, native and foreign, by the media. They were "restyled" away from the stereotypical traits and treated with more sympathy and understanding. While it is true that blacks were given human attributes such as devotion and faithfulness, they were, however, not generally cast in other than subordinate roles.

Another category of study which related to this includes the study of the blacks in other media. Gross and Hardy[8] made a survey of the characterizations of the black in American literature. There are a number of works dealing with the black in the American theater. Among those that this writer found most helpful are the ones written by Isaacs[9] and Mitchell.[10] Although Isaac's work, recently reprinted, is dated more than two decades, it is still definitive for the period covered.

Theses and Dissertations

In her descriptive study of occupational roles represented by Negroes in selected mass media, Balsley[11] analyzed 40 films produced from 1956 to 1958. Her study entitled A Descriptive Study of References Made to Negroes and Occupational Roles Represented by Negroes in Selected Mass Media gave an objective assessment of the black image during the late fifties.

Burke's "The Presentation of the American Negro in Hollywood Films, 1946-1961"[12] provides an analysis of a selected sample of feature films and examines the presentation of the Negro in American films between 1946 and 1961 in 29 films.

Reference should be made in three masters' theses completed at the University of South California's Cinema Department. Theodore[13] made an

analysis of eight selected films released between 1949 and 1961 which depicted social relations between Negroes and whites. Theodore, as part of his research, created a radio program symposium of authoritative views on the Negro in the American motion picture. Fernow[14] included the Negro program as a section of his thesis on the treatment of social problems by the motion picture medium. Chaudhuri[15] duplicated in his thesis much of the material contained in Noble's work.

In 1967, Colle[16] attempted an investigation of the image of the Negro in newspapers, magazines, radio and television, as well as motion pictures. The broad scope of Colle's research curtailed intensive attention to any one medium.

Bloom[17] did a case study of the movie Lost Boundaries, and Wilner[18] did one for Home of the Brave. Each study tried to determine audience reaction to the particular film in question during the mid-forties. Johnson[19] investigated the treatment of the black woman in the American novel for a doctoral dissertation at New York University in 1965.

Subjective comments and attitudes of the black press concerning the portrayal of the black in television, plays and films were researched by Buchanan[20] in 1968. He used the files of two black newspapers: the Chicago Defender and the Pittsburgh Courier as his primary research tools.

Pamphlets and Reports

Stereotyping, placement of the Negro in a race-problem context, and writing out blacks in scripts are covered in a report by the Screen Actors' Guild's Special Committee on the Employment of Negro Actors in Motion Pictures.[21] It declared that:

1. In a critical world period, when the democratic credo is under fire

from our communist foes, it becomes increasingly important that the expanding role of our Negro citizens in the community of this nation be adequately portrayed in the entertainment arts.

2. The realities of the American scene today confirm the portrayal of the Negro as a more general part of the scheme of our society; for example, as postmen, policemen, clerks, doctors, secretaries, government workers and teachers, without necessity of emphasis on race.

3. If writers, producers, directors and casting agents would consider the Negro artist primarily as an artist, to be given consideration for casting in any roles which his ability permits, it would be a vitalizing force in motion pictures and the theater.

4. In the recent past, a well-intentioned but ill-directed sensitivity to this problem has worked inadvertent harm to the Negro artist. Apprehensive of doing injustice to the Negro citizen and offending humanity, writers and producers have tended to completely eliminate the Negro in comedy and servant roles. This policy, well-meant though it may be, is unrealistic and has seriously curtailed the employment of the Negro artist. While caricature and stereotype are always to be condemned, there is nothing inherently wrong in comedy or servant roles when they are part of an honest living presentation. However, when the Negro citizens are presented exclusively in such roles, an imbalance results, and their integration in American life is improperly set before the world.

5. We must correct this situation, not by eliminating the Negro artist, but by enlarging his cope and participation in all types of roles and in all forms of American entertainment -- just as in American life, the Negro citizen's role now extends from the kitchen to the United Nations.

The report noted that the Guild committee has met with heads of the major networks and the Guild has been assured of their sympathy and cooperation in the Guild's program to provide more jobs for blacks.

One case in the early fifties points up some aspects of the black dilemma in television. Arthur[22] relates this incident in news releases from the Screen Actors' Guild. He notes that in the first half of the fifties, complaints which had been heard so frequently in the motion picture industry erupted in television.

The Coordinating Council of Negro Performers urged the State Commission Against Discrimination (SCAD) in New York to schedule a conference

with representatives of advertising agencies and broadcast networks to examine the employment conditions for minority groups which prevailed in the industry. Actual commission testimonies from this meeting were recorded in Carter's[23] *Policies and Practices of Discrimination Commission: Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*. Carter gives insight to how the networks during the fifties were in the "habit" of thinking "white" or perhaps not thinking "black."

Reddick,[24] in his valuable pamphlet, *Educational Programme for the Improvement of Race Relations in Motion Pictures, Radio, the Press and Libraries*, gives a list of what he describes as the principal stereotypes of the Negro in the American mind during the forties and the fifties. They are as follow:

1. The savage African
2. The happy slave
3. The devoted servant
4. The corrupt politician
5. The irresponsible citizen
6. The petty thief
7. The social delinquent
8. The vicious criminal
9. The sexual superman
10. The superior athlete
11. The unhappy non-white
12. The natural-born cook
13. The natural-born musician
14. The perfect entertainer
15. The superstitious churchgoer

16. The chicken and watermelon eater
17. The razor and knife "toter"
18. The uninhibited expressionist
19. The mental inferior

In the following pages, the writer will point out how these stereotypes supplement each other, though they are sometimes mutually contradictory.

In 1953, Lester Walton,[25] one of the big names in black theater, formed a group called the Coordinating Council of Colored Performers - a group dedicated to integrating black people into television work. Walton saw TV as the best "impact" medium in the U.S. and the entire world. He thought that TV would bring remarkable changes because of its ability to flash pictures from all over the world. This would counteract white racial acts, because the world is predominantly nonwhite; colonial powers would be forced to deal with nonwhites in a more realistic way. But he also realized that the white media were more aware of this than the darker people of the world, and that TV would probably be the last place that would accept blacks as performers, writers, producers and directors. Walton was also well aware that the "whiteness" of television in the United States during the fifties was very dangerous, because it saturated many black viewers with positive white images and ideas, while ignoring blackness.

Two organizations in Great Britain, the League of Coloured Peoples and the Racial Relations Group, which were formed in the late fifties, gave the author valuable insight to the treatment of the black image in broadcasting abroad. Murray's[26] The Negro Handbook discusses how both organizations recognize television as one of the most powerful organs of education, and both deplored what appears to have been a constant tenden-

cy to stereotype the Negro as shoeshine boy, Pullman porter and generally what is known as the "Yes, Boss Nigger" in America. Murray's handbook also includes descriptive notes on television and radio presentations which conflict with the two British organizations' campaign against undignified portrayals of minorities.

Magazines and Journals

One of the models for television was the radio industry. What was the record of the radio industry with regard to the image of the Negro? Informed assessment of the situation was reflected by a Time[27] article that noted that it was in radio where the Negro got the fairest treatment; television was new as an entertainment medium, but its artistic and economic roots stemmed from existing media, and in borrowing from this media it accepted their traditional treatment of the Negro image.

One of the difficulties in terms of creating a positive image while eliminating the negative image of the Negro is the "disappearance" of the Negro, for if labels of race are eliminated, models of everyday successful Negroes may disappear with disreputable ones. One tactic used by a concerned group during the early sixties attempted to remedy this.

In 1961, a campaign was started by Sylvia Applebaum to desegregate the advertising in television. Record of this campaign was recorded in the Crisis Magazine.[28] Applebaum indicated that Negroes were essential in advertisements so America would get a new and more accurate image of the Negro, but her examination of the local New York networks in 1961 revealed no Negroes being used in their commercials. Applebaum's campaign consisted primarily of sending letters to corporations and local networks, pointing out the absence of minorities.

In 1962 Dr. Lawrence Plotkin[29] made what was probably the first systematic content analysis of television programming and commercials to determine the frequency and duration of appearances by Negroes on television. Using volunteer monitors to gather data, the survey included the daytime and evening programming for a two-week period on the three network-affiliated stations in New York City which, because of the system of networking, would therefore be an indirect check on the bulk of programming on stations across the country. Plotkin discovered that, on the average, a Negro appeared on the screen once every one and a half hours. About a fourth of these appearances were for less than a minute, another fourth were for one to three minutes, and about half for more than three minutes. In more than half of these castings, he was presented in the traditional roles fulfilling the Negro stereotype. For example, his most frequent role, about one-third of all appearances, was as a musician, singer, or dancer.

While Plotkin examined the exclusion of the Negro from national television, in 1960, the Federal Communications Commission carried on public hearings examining the black exclusion from local television. The FCC's target was programming in Chicago relative to the renewal of the broadcast licenses for stations in that city. No formal study was recorded, but an exploratory investigation was undertaken and published in <u>Broadcasting</u>.[30]

Films

A couple of films made during the fifties and the sixties with major black characterization were also examined through personal knowledge, motion picture directories, and film reviews in newspapers and periodicals to give the author an extensive look at the black image in various facets

of the media.

As in other eras, famous works of literature provided the substance of Negro characterization on film. In seven motion pictures, produced between 1950 and 1961, two recurrent themes emerge relative to the Negro. Either he is sacrificed on behalf of the redemption of a white heroic figure, or he is seen as a happy subservient inhabitant of the glorious old South.

Baker's Young Man with a Horn came to the screen in 1950 with Kirk Douglas as Rick Martin and Juano Hernandez as Art Hazard. As an older Negro jazz musician, Hazard teaches the young Martin all he knows about playing the trumpet. They become fast friends. After gaining success, Martin insults Hazard, thoughtlessly. Deeply hurt, Hazard crosses against oncoming traffic and is killed. The incident first brings guilt, then catharsis, to Martin.

In the Warner Brothers film The Breaking Point (1950), Hernandez appears as Wesley Park, sidekick of Harry Morgan (John Garfield). The script, based upon an Ernest Hemingway story, requires Wesley, who is black, to tell Harry, who is white, "I'm all set. All I worry about is you." This canine loyalty to Harry gets Wesley shot in the next scene.

In the 1961 film adaptation of William Faulkner's Sanctuary, famed folk singer Odetta portrays Nancy. Confessing to a crime she did not commit, Nancy goes to the gallows so that the white heroine (Lee Remick) will be free for a second chance at happiness.

Daryl F. Zanuck released an opulent technicolor movie rendition of Waugh's Island in the Sun in 1957. The story centers on the romances of two interracial couples on the fictitious isle of Santa Marta. The entire film is certainly important as a study of the tropical myth in racial

terms, and even Dandridge's character, though she comes out of the whole business fairly happily, is not entirely free from the stereotype of the Negro as sensualistic.

Progress can be evaluated in terms of where one has yet to go as well as in terms of from where one has come. Temporarily disregarding the former and concentrating on the latter, there were several American motion pictures with a more positive image of the Negro between 1946 and 1961.

Edge of the City (1957) presented one of the more human portrayals of the Negro ever encountered in films. The character of Tommy Tyler (TT) played by Sidney Poitier is endowed with such qualities as courage, loyalty, compassion, humor, tenderness, generosity and understanding. He is pictured as a loving husband and father who earns his living as foreman of a gang of longshoremen. TT's tastefully decorated brownstone apartment includes a large record collection and a television set. The film also depicts several scenes of social integration between black and white characters.

Lorraine Hansberry, a major black playwright of the late fifties and sixties did bring her major dramatic efforts to motion pictures in 1961. Appreciation of Hansberry's Negro characters was not unanimous. Some critics considered A Raisin in the Sun as nothing more than a soap opera made successful by America's collective guilt over the Negro question. It is true that we have seen these types before -- Lena, "a tyrannical but good-natured matriarch;" Walter, "a frustrated young man surrounded by too many women;" Beneatha, "a free-thinking college student," but it is equally true that we have never seen them before as blacks of the late fifties.

This story is unique in the sense that it directs sensitive attention to honest forms and expressions of black reality, as opposed to low-level

melodramatic treatment of mere themes. The foremost fact of this film is the essential humanity of its characters. They are not mere stereotypes

Summary

Admittedly, the media's attitude to the question of the black minority in the United States has been for many years something of a reflection of the attitude of average America. However, first it may be logical to contend from the review of the literature that if television had, from the very first, endeavored to portray the black in a less unsympathetic light, or had tried in any way to ease racial tension, it would have constituted an invaluable help toward the betterment of relations between the American man-on-the-street and his erstwhile slave. On the other hand, some of the literature reviewed would probably retort that television programming during the fifties and the sixties was not designed as "propaganda," but in the following pages it is proposed to indicate, with appropriate evidence collected from the literature review that the opposite is precisely the case.

ENDNOTES

[1] Peter Noble, _The Negro in Films_, London: Skelton Robinson, 1948.

[2] V.J. Jerome, _The Negro in Hollywood Films_, New Yrok: Masses and Mainstream, 1950.

[3] Siegfried Kracauer, "National Types as Hollywood Presents Them," _Mass Cultures_, Bernard Rosenberg and David White, eds. Glencoe, Ill: The Free Press, 1957.

[4] Hortense Powdermaker, Hollywood, The Dream Factory; An Anthropologist Looks at the Movie Makers. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1950.

[5] Tom Fletcher, _100 Years of the Negro in Show Business_, New York: Burdge and Company, 1954.

[6] Edgar Dale, _The Content of Motion Pictures_, New York: Macmillan Co., 1935.

[7] Dale Chalmer, _Hooded Americanism_, New York: Doubleday, 1965.

[8] Seymour L. Gross and John L. Hardy, eds. _Images of the Negro in American Literature_. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

[9] Edith J. Isaacs, _The Negro in the American Theatre_, New York: Theatre Arts, 1947.

[10] Loften Mitchell, _Black Drama: The Story of the American Negro in the Theatre_, New York: Hawthorne Books, 1967.

[11] Daisy F. Balsley, "A Descriptive Study of References Made to Negroes and Occupational Roles Represented by Negroes in Selected Mass Media," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Denver, 1959.

12 William L. Burke, "The Presentation of the American Negro in Hollywood Films, 1946-1961: Analysis of a Selected Sample of Feature Films," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1965.

13 Terry Theodore, "The Negro in Hollywood: A Critical Study of Entertainment Films Containing Negro Themes," Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Southern California, 1962.

14 Donald L. Fernow, "The Treatment of Social Problems in the Entertainment Film," Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Southern California, 1952.

15 Arun Chaudhuri, "A Study of the Negro Problem in Motion Pictures," Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Southern California, 1951.

16 Royal D. Colle, "The Negro Image and the Mass Media," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1967.

17 Samuel W. Bloom, "A Social Psychological Study of Motion Picture Audience Behavior; A Case Study of the Negro Image in Mass Communication," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1951.

18 Daniel W. Wilner, "Attitude as a Determinant of Perception in the Mass Media of Communication: Reactions to the Motion Picture 'Home of the Brave'," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1951.

19 Beulah V. Johnson, "The Treatment of the Negro Woman as a Major Character in American Novels, 1900-1950," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1955.

20 Singer A. Buchanan, "A Study of the Attitudes of the Writers of the Negro Press Toward the Depiction of the Negro in Plays, Television and Films: 1930-1965," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1968.

21 Statement of policy adopted by the Board of Directors of the Screen Actors' Guild --- November 9, 1952.

22 News release from Screen Actors' Guild, marked for release November 10, 1952.

[23] Elmer A. Carter, "Policies and Practices of Discrimination Commissions," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, March 1975.

[24] C.D. Reddick, "Educational Program for the Improvement of Race Relations: Motion Pictures, Radio, the Press and Libraries," Journal of Negro Education, Summer 1944, Vol. 13, No. 3.

[25] John Davis, ed. The American Negro Reference Book, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966.

[26] Florence Murray, ed., The Negro Handbook, New York: Wendell Malliet and Company, 1946.

[27] Time, January 14, 1952.

[28] Crisis, May 1963.

[29] Appearance of Negroes on Television, The Committe on Integration, New York: Society for Ethical Culture, 1964.

[30] Broadcasting, August 30, 1965.

CHAPTER III

TWO DECADES IN THE HISTORY OF THE BLACK IMAGE

The Fifties

The 1950's was an era to be remembered as apathetic and sleepy-eyed, vulgar and hypocritical, grandiose, spectacular and tasteless.[1] Yet, the so-called Eisenhower Age was one of change and turbulence, a decade that encompassed an array of incongruities: McCarthy in the Senate, troops in Korea, a Nobel Peace Prize for Ralphe Bunche in Sweden, the National Guard in Cicero and Chicago, the Supreme Court Decision of 1954, Marian Anderson at the Met, Emmett Till lynched in Mississippi, bus boycotts (and later bombings) in Montgomery, the rise of Martin Luther King, Jr., sit-ins in Oklahoma and federal troops in Arkansas.[2]

The social-political whirl of the fifties penetrated the broadcasting industry, which, like the rest of the country, had to undergo change. Television had come into homes in record numbers across the nation and when box-office attendance at the movies dropped off drastically, after its great boom during the war years, the film industry picked up bolder themes, in part as a realistic reflection of the growing chaos in the streets of America and in the psyches of its citizens. Gone almost entirely was the magical, romantic, bigger-than-life daydream quality of the old movies, as independent film makers brought to the public films about the problems confronting racial and religious minorities. Katz notes:

> ... one of the biggest problems faced by Americans in the post-war years was that of making America a land of liberty and justice for all. Many whites had returned from Europe and Asia believing that if the idea of a 'master race' was wrong for our enemies, it was wrong for America, too.[3]

In the earliest television programs, blacks had some visibility. The great gains of the late 1940s were continued in the 1950s with the emergence of distinct black personalities who, through their own idiosyncrasies, invigorated the Negro lead character and the Negro themes. Black entertainers were featured on shows hosted by Ed Sullivan, Arthur Godfrey and Milton Berle. In the early 50's, such programs had a real impact; in a sense, they were television. As a matter of fact, people like Ed Sullivan admitted that they "found it wise to use at least one colored star regularly in their telecast format."[4] At one time during the 50's, there were as many as ten all-black shows with regular television schedules. One such show, "The Sammy Davis, Jr. Show," was broadcast in the deep South. Such programs were considered sure signs of television's great liberalism. But, those with a healthy sense saw television was still in a "try-and-hope-it-works" stage; that some things would be done until the first complaint and then dropped without challenge.[5]

But it is one thing to see Duke Ellington on "Toast of the Town," the Dixie Hummingbirds on Arthur Godfrey's "Morning Show," or the neighborhood shoe-shine boy do his version of "You Are My Sunshine" on a local variety show. It is another thing completely to see any realistic drama or comedy involving black lives. As highly proclaimed as it was, the number of blacks in the late 40's and early 50's on television was not impressive. What they did was not unimpressive; it was unoriginal. Blacks had always been singing and dancing for white America. They had not historically portrayed themselves or represented the reality of black American

lives.

The early 50's saw the first weekly programs that featured black actors, in definite black roles. Certainly a step forward, but as the series themselves proved, not a change of direction. "Beulah" was probably the first black sitcom. It debuted in 1950, and ran until 1953.[6] Beulah was a domestic, working for a white family. She had other black domestic friends. For some reason, these series received little attention; at least, little seems to be written about its stars, or its content. There were a number of Beulahs - Ethel Waters, Hattie McDaniel, and Louis Beavers. Butterfly McQueen was also featured as Oriole, another member of the neighborhood domestic gang. Considering the "name" actresses involved in "Beulah," one wonders why it went so unnoticed. Perhaps the idea of maids in a white neighborhood, with a visible (white) employer-(black) employee relationship was easily accepted by whites and blacks. "Beulah" seems pretty well forgotten, compared to the popularity and controversy of the next black television series, "Amos and Andy."

A perennial frustration for those concerned abou the image of the Negro was the radio comedy series initiated in Chicago in 1925 as "Sam 'n' Henry" and renamed "Amos 'n' Andy" three years later. The original radio characters were white, whose dialect depicted its predominantly Negro characters as lazy, conniving, illiterate buffoons. It was carried throughout the country via one of the major radio networks and, though it died as a radio program with the changing pattern of the medium in mid-century, it turned up on the CBS television network.

In 1951 CBS paid the creators of the radio series "Amos and Andy" $2.5 million for 20-year rights to the program. They used an all-Negro cast and the same characterizations which had been so disturbing to many

Negroes previously. After a two-year run as a weekly coast-to-coast network show, it started a 13-year stand in television syndication,[7] being distributed in the United States and abroad by CBS films, which claimed that it was among its most widely circulated properties.

It was quite popular, as it had been on radio, and the writers of the show, Freeman Godsen and Charles Correll, often said that "Amos and Andy" had as many "avid colored fans as white." But the program still had problems. The change to situation comedy meant bringing in more elements of the outside community, and this increased the unrealistic aspect of the show. All the judges, policemen, show owners, clerks, etc., were always black; and no black man had to live in "Amos and Andy's" setting of Harlem to know black life wasn't like that. The actors who worked on "Amos and Andy" were sometimes criticized for being a part of its slander.[8] In reply to such criticism, Gosden and Correll replied, "We have tried to mirror the trials and tribulations of Negroes, of whom we are very fond."

Once, Gosden tried to give Spencer Williams, who played Andy, some pointers on his dialect. Gosden claimed that he "ought to know how Amos and Andy should talk," having originated the series; Williams' comeback was that he "ought to know how Negroes talk, having been one all my life."[9]

Its appearance on American TV screens was usually met with protests from the NAACP and others, but reaction also came from overseas. In 1963, "Amos and Andy" was sold in two African countries, Kenya and Western Nigeria, but it ran into a government ban. An official of the Kenyan government indicated that the filmed programs could not be shown because they might prove "quite misleading" to people in Kenya. Ultimately, none of the "Amos and Andy" shows were shipped to Africa.[10]

In the summer of 1964, when racial tensions were running high around

this country, Negro civil rights spokesmen protested the plan of a Chicago television station to present reruns of "Amos and Andy." In 1966, while approximately five television stations were running out contracts for the program, CBS films announced that the series would no longer be available for sale. It was withdrawn from the CBS catalogue because it was "outdated" and, said a spokesman, "we didn't get the demand" for the show anymore.[11] Changing attitudes in the black community were responsible for CBS barring it from any syndication or overseas sale in 1966.[12]

By the time "Amos and Andy" went off the air, many black people had become more aware of the power of television, and its ability to build or destroy the black image. Robert Landry, a writer for CBS, addressed a memo to many of his fellow writers emphasizing the need to cut such corrosive stereotypes from broadcast productions.

The economic structure of radio programming, especially the sponsorship concept of advertising support, carried over into television and with it came a timidity to venture into areas which would alienate potential consumers of the advertiser's product. With some exceptions, Negro participation in television programs was feared by some advertising executives as constituting a threat to sales. Singers, sports figures and dancers, especially those who achieved "star" stature, were acceptable, but absent were Negroes in crowd scenes, in routine dramatic parts and in "journeyman" choral and dance groups which appeared regularly on television. The exceptions were the Amos and Andy, Beulah, and Rochester types, which are considered by many blacks to be "Uncle Toms."[13]

One case in the early 1950's points up some aspects of the dilemma in television. Robert Arthur, associate producer of "Philco Playhouse," was impressed by some observations he once made on the waterfronts where

stevedores were loading and unloading ships. He suggested to the show's producer, Gordon Duff, that they do a drama about a Negro laborer using Sidney Poitier in the lead role. Duff was reluctant to go ahead with the program because "They won't stand for this kind of material."[14] However, hearing that the "Playhouse" series was about to be cancelled, the two men agreed to do Aurther's show as the last in the series, since its success or failure would have no impact on the future of the "Philco Playhouse." With some reluctance, the key "gatekeepers" gave clearance to the project and "A Man Is Ten Feet Tall" was telecast nationwide with Poitier as the first Negro to have a major role in a television drama. "Serious repercussions" followed from the show. Editorials in Southern papers accused everyone concerned with the production of being Communists, and in addition, several appliance franchise holders cancelled their distributorship of Philco products in the South. It was an incident that reinforced an already great caution among broadcast and advertising people, and consequently few Negroes moved before the television cameras.

Thus, in the first half of the fifties, the complaints which had been heard so frequently in the motion picture industry erupted in television. Spokesmen for Negro performers charged that Negroes were being systematically excluded from television programs except for "Negro roles" which failed to reflect their participation in the "ordinary familiar occupations and activities."[15]

In one instance, the New York chapter of the NAACP reacted to this situation by appealing for a two-hour boycott of television and radio shows, an effort in which both the Urban League and the Council for Negro Performers cooperated.[16]

On November 5, 1956, NBC, with puclicity, broke the color line by

giving Nat King Cole his own television program; the first black star to lead his own network show.[17] His unheralded debut was, in a sense, appropriate, for Cole had been working for years to get his own program. Before the show began, he stated in an Ebony interview:

> I have a fight now in my own business, in TV; I realize what TV is doing. I know they are freezing the Negro out. I know that no Negro has a TV show. I'm breaking that down. I'm fighting on the inside, without publicity.[18]

Cole's fight was never won because of racial problems. Once his show aired, it was changed from a 15-minute summer replacement show to a half-hour primetime spot against "The $64,000 Question," and it still did well in the ratings. It was carried by 77 stations, with about half of those being in the South.[19] However, it was aired without a sponsor because of a general fear by the advertisers that their product would be linked to a black face. The racial prejudice in the agencies was the worst kind, according to Cole: "fear of the unknown and of offending."[20] The fear of offending the white consumers, not the desire to gain support of the black consumers, loomed in the minds of would-be sponsors.

NBC supported the show with $20,000 per week, while the search for a sponsor went on, and on, and on. Many stars appeared for free as personal favors to "the King."[21] Finally, in 1957, Rheingold Beer stepped forward as a cosponsor. Up to this time, primetime television shows were always fully supported by one sponsor. But Rheingold only had a regional distribution, and wasn't able to buy the show completely. The show continued for a while, as the first cosponsored network program, picking up an occasional sponsor here and there.[22] But, it never did get complete financial underwriting and quietly folded in December, 1957. It is interesting to note that the networks did not try again to give a black star his own variety-type program until 1966, when Sammy Davis, Jr. had a short-lived

weekly program called "The Sammy Davis, Jr. Variety Show."

For the rest of the fifties, Afro-Americans had to be content with watching Rochester take care of "Mr. Benny," or an occasional special like "Green Pastures," or someone's maid doing a walk-on bit. Other than these rare exceptions, American television screen remained predominantly white.

In retrospect, the first real decade of television may have began to fulfill its promise to America in general, but not to the blacks in particular. It was limited to the same stereotypes of previous media forms. Television had access to the living rooms of America, but it self-consciously catered only to the minority audience of white middle class U.S.A. The disappointment of black viewers in the 50's, however, was bound to cause some changes. Television, perhaps more than any other form of mass communication, was avidly and continuously viewed by blacks.

By 1959, America was approaching a social upheaval, a new period in which racism would be revealed as a national sickness. The doctrine of integration would be uncovered as too simple an answer to so complex a situation, and the American black man would begin to assert himself culturally, and articulate the rage which he had suppressed for so many years. The great social and political changes of the 1950's and their impact on television would render as obsolete much of the work of the black stars and personalities of this decade. This action would then usher in a totally new type of black film and television--even a new type of black star.

The Sixties

Turbulent, guarded and paranoid--that was the steaming 1960's when first the streets and then the screens, both film and television, exploded

with anger and insolence. No longer were sad-eyed black people trying to prove their worth in order to fit into white worlds. No longer were submissive, patient Negroes pleading for acceptance. Instead, the head-strong militants appeared. Black hearts were still broken, and black lives were still ruined. But with the militants, black rage, black anger, and black power began their maddening stomp, overturning the old placid ways and lifting eyebrows as they introduced to America the deep-seated bitterness which had been ignored for so long. The 1960s may prove to be the most important decade in the twentieth century for black Americans. An era of great change, the start of a transition period which we have yet to see come to an end. It started with sit-ins, boycotts and marches and ended with riots, demonstrations and some horrifying assassinations. In 1960, Negroes were quietly asking for their rights. By 1969, blacks were demanding them. The decade moved from the traditional goal of cultural and academic assimilation to one of almost absolute separatism and the evolution of the black cultural aesthetic.[23]

Something was bound to happen to the black man's image in the 60's--not because of any great changes in the communication industry itself, but because of the drastic changes in all of American society. Because of the tremendous push and publicity suddenly given to the black cause, people were newly "interested." Suddenly, it was not enough to have a "token black friend;" one had to be able to sincerely and honestly "communicate." It was a reminder of the rage for blackness that swept elite and liberal circles in the 20's--the period that Langston Hughes so perfectly described as the time "when the Negro was in vogue."[24] All of these activity, quite naturally, worked its way into television, but the process took some time.

This is an example of cultural lag, of the reluctance to truly reflect America's sociological changes, for fear of upsetting those viewers who chose to ignore them. Even at a time when civil rights was front page language, blacks had not yet "arrived" in television programming. This lack of "arrival" soon became a sore point for the television industry, as well as the civil rights movement. Coverage of such occurences as the use of police dogs on Southern demonstrators was directly responsible for changing people's attitudes about civil rights. Blacks had learned something they suspected all along about television: if you matter, you will be the focus of national attention. Black superstars and great athletes, and some civil rights personalities, mattered, but the day-to-day culture and life of the average black man did not matter. It was never portrayed in the multitude of dramatic and variety entertainment programs that television produced.[25] Considering the sugar-coated version television gave of white America, there were grounds on which even the most WASPy American could protest.

By the early 1960s, it was clear that broadcasting and economic foundation were vulnerable to pressures on behalf of Negroes just as they had previously been to influence of other groups, including anti-Negro forces. One popular television publication, TV Guide, in citing programs produced by the three networks which included Negro performers, called the 1963-64 television season "The Year of the Negro,"[26] and pointed out that more Negroes worked in the medium as actors and in variety bits than ever before in history.

In 1962, a group called the Committee on Integration of the New York Society for Ethical Culture took a two-week primetime survey of how blacks appeared on the television screen. Of the 398 half-hour units of televi-

sion viewing, there were no black people in 390 units. Of the 89 units that did show blacks, 27 units featured them only as singers, dancers, or musicians (usually in transient, nonweekly appearances). The next highest rating for appearances of blacks was in hard news and documentaries (once again, transient, nonweekly appearances). The committee contended, "This clearly reflects the networks' and advertisers' response to pressure of civil rights and governmental organizations."[27]

As for the tiny fraction of dramatic appearances, the actual situation of the performances often was not as impressive as the figures: crowd faces, walk-ons, maids and doorman roles, etc.

It appears that all the portrayals observed during 1962 included one or more of the familiar Negro stereotypes listed by Reddick in the Summer, 1944 issue of Journal of Negro Education.[28] With the exception of Sidney Poitier, the appearances by Negroes in American television during 1962 were limited to background roles in several productions, which even film critics did not consider as serious film fare.[29] Burke defines the category of characterization labelled as background:

> There exists a preponderate subordination of characters cast in visually and/or verbally differentiated roles (to exclude the normal functions of chorus, street backgrounds, etc.) in matters of costume, personality and character development, film angles, relegation to rear planes of action, etc. The character statement here is simply weak, or nonexistent.[30]

In 1961, Ethel Waters did an episode on "Route 66" and ran into the same problem that actors in "Amos and Andy" had ten years earlier. The cast was all black except for the two regular principals of the show. The technical crew, however, were all white. At one point when Waters sang "Good Night, Sweet Blues," a writer stepped in to "correct" her interpretation of it. The fact that he thought of nothing of imposing on her his view of how a black blues singer ought to sing a black blues song,

just one more example of the "whiteness" that totally permeated television production in the early 60's. Much of this writer's "concern"[31] sprang from the fact that the series was taking a large risk in doing this particular program, and the crew had to strictly supervise the whole thing.

More than there being any overt effort to keep black faces, black thought and black experiences out of television, there was this pervasive "whiteness" to the whole television industry, and as blacks became more vocal about this constant "whitewash," there was more buck-passing, and more excuses. The psychology and economics of segregation were intensified in television. The networks claimed no control over the situation because of pressure from advertising agencies. They claimed that they could only work with what comes to them from the "creative" end, an end that had no black input, since it was totally white.[32]

Inclusion of Negroes in the pilots was especially significant, since these are major sales instruments used to attract sponsors, and to some extent demonstrates that the networks and production firms which financed the pilots were willing to stand on the "rightness" of their casting and bank on the changing social climate to enhance rather than handicap their sales potential.[33] What seems clear to this writer is that the reluctance on the part of persons directly involved in producing programs (e.g., supplying scripts, securing talent, etc.) was based on the anticipated dissatisfaction of advertisers, who, in the largely American system of sponsorship, exert substantial control over program form and content. A breakthrough came when these highly sensitive advertisers recognized, through the positive example of some producers such as Herb Brodkin,[34] and the negative influence of economic threat, that it might be more profitable to retain the old patterns than to change.[35] This is not to suggest

that no altruism was involved in the changes that took place, since some hesitant steps were made as a result of relatively nonthreatening conferences in the fifties. However, the combination of economic incentive and coaxing from many sides in the sixties provoked stronger compliance with the policies industry executives acknowledged as being consistent with American ideals in mid-century.

With television's fantastic impact on American culture, their inability to come to grips with their large black viewership and the reality of Afro-American life became more and more apparent, especially with the entire nation being forced to come to grips with these things. Television was obviously not going to be a leader in helping civil rights; it was going to be something less than even a follower, by trying to maintain the status quo. Loften Mitchell, a long-time observer and participant in black arts in America, observed:

> One of the main reasons that blacks are being accepted in areas like theater today is because that is no longer the place where the real work, and the real money exists. The question is -- how many blacks are on TV? We might watch TV interminably without seeing a Negro (sans sports) ... How much of TV is scripted or produced by black men? TV has no intention of permitting Negroes to participate in it beyond a cursory level. Tokens and lip service only! TV isn't so naive about this as we think -- that is why Fred Friendly quit.[36]

As the drama and change of the civil rights in the 60s unfolded, the "tokens," at least, came to be quite well accepted, which led to slightly bigger and bolder steps. A general need for more realism in entertainment seemed to appear. In 1963, Ossie Davis became a regular member of the "Car 54, Where Are You Now?" cast. Its originator, Nate Aiken, simply explained that it would be "silly" to do a series about the New York police without having anyone black on the force.[37] Soon, more and more blacks in minor but regular roles began to appear. As tele-

vision discovered that viewers weren't terribly upset by black faces on their television screens, and black viewers were quite pleased by the pleasure of being "recognized" on television, they began to capitalize on the "Negro vogue."

Blacks capitalized in the sense that much of what was done with black performers was to use their blackness as a "visibility" factor more than a force in building a character or creating a situation. The same was true in using "controversial" blacks in discussion shows, on panels, etc. People like James Baldwin and Le Roi Jones were seen at infrequent intervals, but seeing such people had less impact than actually seeing their work. This was not, however, dramatizing the excitement going on in black life. Much of the drama/comedy involving blacks boiled down to a lot of talk and little action; a chance for the white man, sitting in his living room, to cluck his tongue and say, "What a shame." Television did not deal with historical or social facts, or bring to light things that white adults or young children never had questioned.[38] The problem of blacks in television was accentuated for blacks in an incident reported by Newsweek magazine in September, 1963:

> Knots of Negro children spent six Saturday afternoons last spring peering through the front windows of New York's Hotel Theresa in the heart of Harlem. Behind the window, a battery of television sets were tuned to each of New York City's seven channels and the children had been promised a silver dollar for each Negro that they could spot on the screens (excluding baseball players). 'We lost only $15 during all that time,' Clarence Funnye, chairman of the Congress of the Racial Equality Committee, which underwrote the project, recalled last week.
>
> Anything but a selfish giveaway, the CORE project was designed to dramatize to Harlem residents just how completely the Negro's role in American life is ignored on television programs and commercials.[39]

During 1962 and 1963, several other forces were working on the problems related to the black image on television. Network corporate policies

called for fair employment practices, and representatives of the networks testified as to their efforts to secure compliance with the policies. A senior executive for CBS Television is reported to have sent a memorandum to all network staff producers, to independent producers of network "package" shows,[40] and to producers of programs for advertising agencies which said:

> It is our feeling that in many cases the failure to cast Negroes in dramatic programs is simply a matter of thinking only in terms of white actors. Therefore, it would be appreciated when you are casting your shows to keep in mind possibilities for Negro performers . . . There are many Negro doctors, lawyers, schoolteachers, engineers, policemen, nurses, jurymen, etc. in everyday life today. Let's be realistic about having them appear as such in our dramatic programs.[41]

NBC and ABC affirmed their nondiscrimination policy in mid-1962, with the the former sending a letter to producers similar to that of CBS. In part, it proclaimed:

> Dramatic shows should present a reasonable reflection of the contemporary American scene . . . Producers are urged to cast Negrroes -- subject to their availability and competence as performers -- as people who are an integral segment of the national society, as well as in those roles when the fact of their minority status is of dramatic significance.[42]

In September, 1962, George Fowler, chairman of the New York State Commission for Human Rights, met with the "principal heads" of the three major networks to express both his and Gov. Nelson Rockefeller's concern over the lack of employment for blacks and other identifiable minorities on television, and their portrayals in the programming of the medium. The State Commission secured George Norford, then employed by NBC, as full-time television consultant for the Commission and each network assigned a "responsible executive" to follow through at the industry end. The consensus of these persons was that broad surveys and studies were not needed, but that "resistant pockets" needed to be identified. They started

by holding a series of meetings with key programming executives, culminating in agreement on a plan which would have Norford confer personally with every producer of every program appearing on the networks. His mission was to arouse an awareness of the dual problems of employment and image (if such awareness did not already exist) and to enlist their active collaboration in finding a solution. These meetings were to be preceded by memos or personal contacts by programming vice-presidents to impart a sense of top-level support to the undertaking. One memo stated, in part:

> I take this occasion to remind you once more that it is the network's intention not only to be fair in its employment practices, but to assure the fact that our programs are an honest reflection of contemporary life. Negroes and other minorities are now engaged in many occupations which are a part of the background of story-telling and their inclusion in casting plans contributes to an honest depiction of places, situations and events.
>
> While we can report progress in this matter, it is our considered opinion that more effort and more conscious planning on the part of our producers can improve the record.[43]

On both east and west coasts, Norford met with vice-presidents, producers, writers, directors, and others directly involved in making decisions which would influence frequency and quality of roles which blacks might fill. In the course of these conversations, he got a "unanimous response" indicating that there is no adverse reaction from the South to the increased use of the blacks or to the variety of the roles in which he is cast, suggesting to him that the "long-feared and much discussed Southern opposition is today nothing more than a broad and baseless myth" which many producers attributed to advertising agencies. Norford interpreted their reactions this way:

> Reprisal against a sponsor's product in the South because a Negro is seen on a program identified with his product might have been a common thing years ago, but there is a changing social climate.

> The nation, including the South, is more receptive to a fuller participation in our national life of all minorities -- racial and religious. Either agency men are ignorant of this fact, or they cling to old fears and ignore it.[44]

Meanwhile, on the west coast, the NAACP organization's labor secretary Herbert Hill said that if results did not come "within a reasonable time," more vigorous action would be taken, with the target being television programs and commercials which fail to portray the Negro fairly or which treat him as the "invisible man."

This led to some interesting plots and premises in the first two "black star" television programs: "I Spy" and "Julia." "I Spy" debuted in 1965, at a time when Bill Cosby was still climbing to the peak of his popularity and was extremely well-known throughout the country. There was talk of many different pilot shows to start his television career, some dealing more with black life than others. Eventually, he was put in a co-star position with Robert Culp on "I Spy," and became the first honest-to-goodness black television series "star."[45]

"I Spy," being an "action-packed" espionage-adventure show, forced the character that Cosby played to make minimum use of his blackness. After all, spies never have to worry about being promoted at work, finding a decent school for kids, or straightening out their identity problems. "I Spy" put its black hero into a social void, where being black only meant having a slightly darker skin. Occasionally, the audience might get a small hint thrown in that people "related" differently to the darker member of the spy team, but it was never anything too "heavy," that might spoil the thrilling side of the show.

Perhaps this had something to do with the image that Cosby had built through his humor. As a comedian, his work was "ethnic" only in subtle ways: whites could dare to identify with him as a human, more than

a black man. Most of the episodes of "I Spy" took place in foreign countries, so there was little change of placing events in the context of the United States' racial climate. There was almost no effort to examine the blackness of Cosby's character, and absolutely no effort to examine the whiteness of Culp's character, or to study how the two psyches worked together. In Cosby's "I Spy" role the only problem with being black was that he could only "get the girl" if the girl were black (an odd "reality" that seems to exist in the minds of television writers). Even with all his spy charisma, Cosby just never seemed to appeal to Caucasian or Mongolian women. Television might co-star Cosby, but they still weren't willing to rock the boat! The chagrined black viewer could always be sure that unless Nancy Wilson, Eartha Kitt, Barbara McNair, etc. were guest starring, their hero would have no love interest.

But, in a way, the fantasy of Bill Cosby as a spy was less offensive than the fantasy of Diahann Carroll as a middle class nurse. "Julia" started in 1968, and gave Miss Carroll the honest claim of being the first black star to truly have her "own" situation comedy. Like all television sitcoms, "Julia" showed a somewhat fictionalized set of lives. Here was a woman with a highly acceptable job, a great wardrobe, and uncommon good looks, following a happy, pleasant life in middle class, integrated America. Its creators had all kinds of defenses for it; it was "lighthearted," not meant to have the impact of a ghetto riot. Who wants to see poverty and despair week after week? That was not entertainment.[46] It was never meant to be politically oriented. "Just because Miss Carroll is black doesn't mean she has to deal with the problems of all black people."[47]

Giving the entire series the benefit of the doubt, there was nothing

malicious about "Julia." It was simply another bit of fluffy television viewing, more in the tradition of Doris Day than Ralph Bunche. Unfortunately, it debuted at a time when civil disturbance was running high in black communities, and it was not the kind of thing that appeased militant minds. It was not what blacks visualized when the Kerner Commission called for more positive black images in media. "Julia's" main failings were based on what it omitted, and its basic approach to the presentation of black family life in the U.S.A. Though it had some gently "kidding" jokes between Julia and her white associates, it didn't recognize the facts of black-white communication problems: everyone on the show operated on a fairly one-dimensional basis that excluded black identity.

Also, there was no male head of the family, a fact that immediately narrowed the range of social examination in the series. Television, in its large magnanimous gesture of having a black-star series, had given the American public a female lead when black youth and black males should have been the "target groups" of Afro-American life.

Traditionally, the black female has accommodated more to the white power structure. The real social problems of blacks have always turned around the black man's inability to have dignity, and the power and respect of his family, "Julia" disregarded all these by turning the only black male roles into potential suitors, not actual male figures involved in the overall series.[48]

Though situation comedies and regular dramatic series seemed unfulfilling, there were some good steps forward for the black image on television in the 60s. For the first time, comedians like Godfrey Cambridge could use racial satire on the great television public; even the institu-

tion of television, and its innate racism came under fire. One of Mr. Cambridge's best routines centered around just that subject:

> . . . Tell me, do you think I look lighter on TV? Now, don't laugh, because this is very important to me! In these days, when we are trying to get as many identifiable Negroes as possible on TV, I want to look as dark as I can. . . I mean, I've been trying to spot the colored girl on Jackie Gleason for two years now! . . . I want all the audience to say, 'Hey, look Ma; it's one of us -- I can identify!' . . . Of course, when people complain to me about the lack of black people on TV, I simply suggest that they do what I do: adjust the contrast knob: Honey, everybody is black on TV! . . . [49]

Besides bringing biting satire to television, the 60s also gave entertainers like Harry Belafonte a chance to express the opinions and experiences of a black person, in a creditable way. When Belafonte hosted the "Tonight Show" in 1968, he wanted to send home a few points to that vast television audience, and he did. But he could only do that because he had the chance to sit in powerful position of subtle public influence for a week.

Also, for once black actors were working enough to have the luxury of examining the roles they were put in and the dilemmas of being a black actor or comedian on television. They came up with some interesting, reflective ideas which are bound to affect future television programming. Some examples from black performers on television in the 60s:

Clarence Williams III ("Mod Squad")

> There is a need for more social realism on TV, but is is unfair to demand it only of shows featuring blacks. The idea ought to be to get all kinds of people regularly playing all kinds of roles.[50]

Michelle Nichols ("Star Trek")

> If only 'cream and cake' roles are given to blacks, the image of Afro-Americans will be just as much a myth as before. I appreciate the industry for opening the door, but it should go further. We ain't all Ralph Bunche.[51]

Ruby Dee ("Peyton Place")

> We are the most commodity-conscious nation in the world; the black man is the commodity this year. If black people sell, they'll be back. If they don't, they won't.[52]

Ivan Dixon ("Hogan's Heroes")

> The TV industry seems to feel a need to project black images, but they just don't know how.[53]

Although by the end of the 60s, the Afro-American image was still nebulous and the black man still had not arrived, there was some glimmer of hope for the 70s. At least television had been forced to become concerned with its black viewers and the black images it projected. The new visibility of Afro-Americans daily on television served to remind the nation that there was more than one race and more than one "Great American Dream."

ENDNOTES

[1]Samuel Bloom, "A Case Study of the Negro Image in Mass Communication" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1956), p. 28.

[2]Ibid., p. 30.

[3]William Loren Katz, Eyewitness: The Negro in American History, New York: Pitman, 1967, p. 457.

[4]"Television Negro Performers Win Better Roles in TV Than in Any Other Entertainment Medium," Ebony, Vol. 5 (June, 1950), p. 22

[5]Ibid., p. 23.

[6]Daniel Blum, A Pictorial History of Television (New York, 1959), p. 102.

[7]Programs which go into syndication are distributed to individual stations for broadcast as each station can fit them into its schedule. Sometimes, a single program may appear on a station three or four times to cathc the morning, afternoon, evning and late evening audiences.

[8]"'Amos and Andy' on Television," Ebony, Vol. 6 (May, 1951), p. 22

[9]E.T. Clayton, "The Tragedy of 'Amos and Andy'," Ebony, Vol. 16 (October, 1961), p. 70.

[10]Val Adams, "'Amos 'n' Andy': All Tuned Out," The New York Times, February 21, 1966, p.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Blum, p. 158.

[13]Richard Gehman, "Black and White Television," TV Guide, June 20, 1964, p. 20.

[14]Robert Alan Aurththur relates this incident in a discussion published as The Relation of the Writer to Television, The Center for the Study of Democaratic Institutions, 1960, pp. 8-10.

[15]Ibid., p. 21.

[16]Newspaper clippings in the "Television" vertical file, Schomberg Collection, New York Public Library.

[17]"The King's Own Show," Newsweek, Vol. 50 (July 15, 1957), p. 90.

[18]"The Nat King Cole Nobody Knows," Ebony, Vol. 11 (October, 1956).

[19]"The King's Own Show," p. 90.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Arthur Schulman and Roger Youman, How Sweet It Was, (New York, 1966), p. 104.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Singer A. Buchanan, "A Study of the Attitude of the Writers of the Negro Press Toward the Depiction of the Negro in Plays, Television and Films 1930--1965." Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan, 1970, p. 31.

[24]Langston Hughes, The Big Sea (New York, 1940), p. 223.

[25]William L. Rivers and Wilbur Schramm, Responsibility in Mass Communications (New York, 1969), p. 177.

[26]Richard Gehman, "Black and White Television?" TV Guide (June 20, 1964), p. 16.

[27]The Frequency of Appearance of Negroes on Television, The Committee on Ontegration, New York Society for Ethical Culture, 1964.

[28]Robert Lewis Shayon, "Living Color in Television," Saturday Review, Vol. 46 (Feb. 9, 1963), p. 57.

[29]C.D. Reddick, "Educational Programs for the Improvement of Race Relations: Motion Pictures, Radio, the Press and Libraries," Journal of Negro Education, Summer 1944 , Vol. 13, No. 3, p. 387.

[30]William L. Burke, "The Presentation of the American Negro in Film, 1946-1961: Analysis of a Selected Sample of Feature Films," (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1965), p. 146.

[31]Richard Lemon, "Black is the Color of TV's Newest Stars," Saturday Evening Post, Vol. 241 (Nov. 30, 1968), p. 82.

[32]Shayon, p. 25.

[33]Report on the Employment and Image of Minority Groups on TV, The Commission for Human Rights, New York, 1963, p. 12.

[34]Among Brodkins' programs were "East Side/West Side" and "The Defenders," both of which used blacks regularly.

[35]The sensitivity on the part of broadcasters is part of the folklore of the industry. It is aptly illustrated by the circumstances leading to the telecast of Rod Serling's drama, "Noon on Doomsday," which dealt with the Emmett Till case in the South. Before broadcast, certain adjustments were made: the locale was changed to New England, the sponsor issued a release to Southern newspapers disavowing any connection with the Southern locale; no blacks appeared in the play, and a scene in which a character was to drink Coca-Cola was taken out because it was regarded as a "Southern drink."

[36]Loften Mitchell, Black Drama (New York, 1967), pp. 231-232.

[37]Shayon, "Living Color on TV - Part 2," Saturday Review, Vol. 46 (Feb. 9, 1963), p. 57.

[38]Mitchell, p. 232.

[39]Newsweek, September 9, 1963, p. 63.

[40]Package shows are programs created and purchased by independent companies and sold to the network or stations for broadcast.

[41]Testimony of Lawrence Lowman, Vice-President for Personnel at CBS, reported in Employment Practices in the Performing Arts, pp. 52-53, and summarized in a follow-up study discussed below: The Frequency of Appearance of Negroes on Television, The Committee on Integration, New York Society for Ethical Culture, 1964.

[42]The New York Times, June 4, 1962.

[43]Report on the Employment and Image of Minority Groups on TV, p. 3.

[44]Ibid., p. 21

[45]Irving Settel and William Laas, A Pictorial History of Television (New York, 1969), p. 162.

[46]"Julia," Ebony, Vol. 25 (November, 1968), p. 57.

[47]Shayon, "Change - Views of Diahann Carroll," _Saturday Review_, Vol. 53 (April 18, 1970), p. 46.

[48]Shayon, "Julia: Breakthrough or Letdown?" _Saturday Review_, Vol. 51 (April 20, 1968), p. 49.

[49]Godfrey Cambridge, "The Cotton Pickin' Days Are Over," Epic Records.

[50]"Belafonte Power," _Newsweek_, Vol. 71 (February 19, 1968), p. 101.

[51]Lemon, _loc_. _cit_.

[52]Ibid., p. 84.

[53]Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

> Altruism is slow along the path of human progress. It ambles and stumbles along after science. And only by force of circumstance is it allowed to function.
>
> -- Charles Chaplin, *My Autobiography*

In piecing together materials relating to the treatment of the black image on television in the 50's and 60's, a discernible pattern emerges. Initially, blacks appeared most consistently in traditional stereotypes. This treatment was born largely of ignorance, habit and an attempt to appeal to some segments of the audience. An increased sensitivity of the media to stereotyping the black brought on exhortations, pleadings and conferences with stronger, more articulate pressure groups. With this, however, came a decreased visibility of the black altogether, a move on the part of the media people motivated by a desire not to antagonize anyone. This invisibility hardly satisfied blacks who met the change with frustration, disappointment and bitterness.

The conference table sessions of the sixties often included veiled or explicit threats of legal action and were aimed at writers, directors, or even media managers and at the economic base of the communication structure: the advertiser and the exhibitor. As a consequence, blacks began appearing more frequently and in a more favorable context in television programs. Thus, to a large extent, it has been "the force of circumstances" which has prompted the "altruism" evident in the content of television in

the second half of the twentieth century to emerge. Some of the implications of the long-standing broadcasting practice in depicting blacks in an abrasive or stereotypical way, or to grossly ignore them and their achievements, have been noted in the preceding pages.

Scientific findings indicate that " . . . stereotypes are quite resistant to change, although changing social and economic conditions can lead to shifts over a long period of time."[1]

It seems that the blacks of these decades could not do anything without it being stereotyped and turned against them. What could have been done about the stereotyping of the black image during the 50s and the 60s? For one thing, blacks needed a strong media, a stronger media of visual mass communication so that blacks could define how they should act, communicate, and live in an exploitative society that will not give up its exploiting. Then, if the blacks' ways and methods are stereotyped by the larger society, so be it. Blacks should not seek to change these ways, but should be proud of them.

Recommendations for Further Study

Several additional lines of investigation could be employed for future research in this area. First, an examination of the black image on television in the 70s and the 80s could be very useful. Second, the first two decades of the black image on television in comparison with the decades of the 70s and the 80s could be very interesting. The effects of this comparison could be studied to determine signs of change in the black image and if the black's visibility is in greater evidence.

Finally, an attempt should be made to compare the black image on television to other minority images on television. This should be carried

out with an examination to see if similar treatment was visible.

No one knows what the future holds. We only know that the black man's past entitles him to a better future. And we know that black actors can transcend even base material. And now we can only hope that new dazzling "black lights" will emerge to capture and extend our imaginations as good characterizations in telecasting should be.

ENDNOTES

[1]Bernard Berelson and Gary Steiner, *Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings* (Chicago, 1964), p. 500.

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. BOOKS

Adams, Romanzo. "Interracial Marriage and Social Change in Race," Individual and Collective Behavior. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1958.

Berrelson, Bernard and Gary A. Steiner. Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1964.

Blum, Daniel. A Pictorial History of Television. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1959.

Chalmer, David. Hooded Americanism. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1965.

Cripps, Thomas R. "The Myth of the Southern Box Office -- A Factor in Racial Stereotyping in American Movies, 1920-1940," The Black Experience in America. Austin, Txas: University of Texas Press, 1970.

Dale, Edgar. The Content of Motion Pictures. New York: Macmillan Co., 1935.

Fletcher, Tom. 100 Years of the Negro in Show Business. New York: Burdge and Company, 1954.

Gross, Seymour L. and John Hardy. Eds. Images of the Negro in American Literature. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966.

Hughes, Langston. The Big Sea. New York: Balantine, 1940.

Hayakawa, S.I. "Television and the American Negro," Sight and Sound Society. David M. White and Richard Averson, Eds. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1968.

Isaacs, Edith J. The Negro in the American Theatre. New York: Theatre Arts, 1947.

Jerome, V.J. The Negro in Hollywood Films. New York: Masses and Mainstream, 1950.

Katz Loren, William. Eyewitness: The Negro in American History. New York: Pitman, 1967.

Killens, John O. "We Refuse to Look at Ourselves Through the Eyes of White America," Negro Protest Thought in the 20th Century. Francis Broderick and August Meier, Eds. New York: Morrow, 1965.

Kracauer, Siegfried. "National Types as Hollywood Presents Them," Mass Culture. Bernard Rosenberg and David M. White, Eds. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1957.

Mitchell, Loften. Black Drama: The Story of the American Negro in the Theatre. New York: Hawthorne Books, 1967.

Murray, Florence, ed. The Negro Handbook. New York: Wendell Malliet and Company, 1946.

Noble, Peter. The Negro in Films. London: Skelton, Robinson, 1948.

Powdermaker, Hortense. Hollywood: The Dream Factory; An Anthropologist Looks at the Movie Makers. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1950.

Rivers, William L. and Wilbur Schramm. Responsibility in Mass Communication. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.

Settel, Irving and William Laas. A Pictorial History of Television. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.

Shulman, Arthur and Roger Youman. How Sweet It Was. New York: Morrow, 1960.

II. THESES AND DISSERTATIONS

Balsley, Daisy F. "A Descriptive Study of References Made to Negroes and Occupational Roles Represented by Negroes in Selected Mass Media." Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Denver, 1959.

Bloom, Samuel W. "A Social Psychological Study of Motion Picture Audience Behavior; A Case Study of the Negro Image in Mass Communications." Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1956.

Buchanan, Singer A. "A Study of the Attitudes of the Writer of the Negro in Plays, Films and Television: 1930: 1965." Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1968.

Burke, William L. "The Presentation of the American Negro in Hollywood Films, 1946-1961: Analysis of a Selected Sample of Feature Films." Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1965.

Chaudhuri, Arun. "A Study of the Negro Problem in Motion Pictures." Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Southern California, 1951.

Colle, Royal D. "The Negro Image and the Mass Media." Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1967.

Fernow, Donald L. "The Treatment of Social Problems in the Entertainment Film." Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Southern California, 1952.

Johnson, Beulah V. "The Treatment of the Negro Woman as a Major Character in American Novels, 1900-1950." Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1955.

Theodore, Terry. "The Negro in Hollywood: A Critical Study of Entertainment Films Containing Negro Themes." Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Southern California, 1962.

Wilner, Daniel M. "Attitudes As a Determinant of Perception in the Mass Media of Communication: Reaction to the Motion Picture 'Home of Brave'." Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1951.

III. ARTICLES

__________. "Amos and Andy on Television," Ebony (May 1951).

Clayton, E.T. "The Tragedy of Amos and Andy," Ebony (October 1961).

__________. "Julia," Ebony (November 1968).

__________. "Television Negro Performers Win Better Roles in TV Than in Any Other Entertainment Medium," Ebony (June 1950).

__________. "The Nat King Cole Nobody Knows," Ebony (October 1956).

__________. "Along the NAACP Battlefront," Crisis (May 1963).

__________. "Belafonte Power," Newsweek (February 18, 1968).

__________. "The King's Own Show," Newsweek (July 9, 1957).

Adams, Val. "Amos 'n' Andy: All Tuned Out," The New York Times (February 21, 1966).

Lemon, Richard. "Black Is the Color of TV's Newest Stars," Saturday Evening Post (November 30, 1968).

Shayon, Robert Lewis. "Julia: Breakthrough or Letdown?" Saturday Review (April 20, 1968).

Shayon, Robert Lewis. "Living Color on TV --- Part 2," Saturday Review (February 9, 1963).

Gehman, Richard. "Black and White Television? Part I," TV Guide (June 20, 1964).

IV. REPORTS

Report on Employment and Image of Minority Groups on TV. The Commission for Human Rights on TV. New York, 1963.

V. RECORDS

Cambridge, Godfrey. "Them Cotton Pickin' Days Are Over." Epic Records, 1963

VI. FILMS

A Raisin in the Sun (1961)

Edge of the City (1957)

Island in the Sun (1957)

Sanctuary (1960)

The Breaking Point (1950)

Young Man with a Horn (1950)

VITA

Rebecca Ruth Marks

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: LOOKING BACK THROUGH THE GLASS DARKLY: THE BLACK IMAGE IN AMERICAN T.V., THE FIRST TWO DECADES

Major Field: Mass Communications

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 28, 1960, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph E. Marks.

Education: Graduated from Booker T. Washington High School, Tulsa, Oklahoma, in May, 1978; received Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, in May, 1983; completed requirements for the Master of Science degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 1985.

Professional Experience: Library Assistant, Rudisill North Regional Library, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1979-80; Radio Host, Angelic Sounds, Sapulpa, Oklahoma, 1980-81; News Intern, Norman Cable, Norman, Oklahoma, 1981-81; Graduate Assistant, School of Journalism, Oklahoma State University, 1983-84; Substitute Teacher, Tulsa Public School, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1984-85.

Professional Organizations: Member, Women in Communications, Delta Sigma Theta, Society of Black Journalists, Society of Black Professional Women.