

# VIEWPOINT

## TV lags behind in portrayal of Blacks

By **BEVERLY SHEPARD**  
Special Projects Editor

Although the last few decades of the 20th century have marked advancement for the Black man, news of a different image has

### AN EDITORIAL

apparently not reached television writers, producers, or directors. The eye-bucking, lip-chawing, yes-sur antics of the 1930s have become more subtle stereotypes today. Remnants of these stereotypes exist in characters like J.J. in "Good Times" and George Jefferson in "The Jeffersons."

A decade ago, Black television stars filled the ultra-cool, suave right-on man, image. Clarence Lawrence III, who was Link in the Mod Squad, was such a character. The disc jockey on "Dance Fever" typifies that all too worn-out hippish Black.

When Diahann Carroll starred in "Julia," Blacks were so glad to see another Black on the screen, that they disregarded the show's idealistic setting. The character portrayed "blackness" so ambiguously that it could have been played by any white woman as well.

Thus in the 70s white writers continue to present Blacks in situational comedies. Themes in "That's My Mama" and "What's Happening" were never serious enough to allow the viewing audience to

get a clear perception of Black interaction with themselves and white society.

At one time, all Blacks were presented in ghettos. In "Good Times," the Evans family was poor, but they "was sho nuff happy." Estelle Rolle, seeing through these shallow portrayals, quit the show until writers agreed to concentrate on more serious themes and a more mature role for J.J.

Redd Foxx does not dispel stereotypes either when in "Sanford and Son" reruns, he portrays a backwards, lazy junk dealer.

When Blacks were finally brought out of T.V. ghettos, they did so in the creation of George Jefferson, who at times comes closest to the 1930 buffoonery image. Then too, there's that loud-mouthed precocious brat, Gary Coleman, on "Diff'rent Strokes." The writers of this show actually expect people to believe that a kind-hearted, upper-middle class white man adopted two Black ghetto boys into his home. Then, he has a white daughter and a cook who just love them, the boys have only a few bad habits so they adapt perfectly, and the entire family lives happily.

Last year's T.V. programming did see some breakthrough in Black role-casting. In an hour long CBS program titled, "Paris," James Earl Jones portrayed a happily married police captain named Woody Paris. Paris rarely emphasized the fact of Jones' being a Black man but rather tried to typify him as a universal character. Yet the dignity with which the role was played surpassed the buffoonery

of George Jefferson without becoming the super-dynamics of a fast-paced Starsky and Hutch type.

As a kick-off from "Soap," ABC aired "Benson" starring Robert Guillaume. In this 30 minute comedy, Benson becomes the patriarch of a white governor's household. The talented 51-year-old Guillaume, whether on stage showing off his bass voice or as an actor, comes across as a very positive and unique character. Even though his character on "Soap" was that of a servant, Benson's arrogance and familiarity surpassed the apron and dustcloth exterior.

Another ABC program, "The Lazarus Syndrome," starred 42-year-old Louis Gossett Jr. as Dr. MacArthur St. Clair. St. Clair is a cardiologist and chief of staff at a privately-owned memorial hospital... The show aired for one hour and after being discontinued for some technical adjustments, it supposedly returns in January. The American public knew of Gossett's acting talent from his portrayal of Fiddler in "Roots," which won him the

1977 Emmy for Best Actor. Yet, somehow the show just isn't what was expected. Perhaps it is Gossett's ill-cast white co-star or perhaps white writers have difficulty developing the character of a Black cardiologist.

Neither of these three shows are written, produced or directed by Blacks. This brings to mind one very serious problem that conflicts with the portrayal of Blacks on T.V. Blacks are characterized as the white man believes them to be. There has been no successful median between the idealistic and the ridiculous.

ESSENCE magazine points out that only 4.7% of all television programs on public T.V. are by or about minorities. The American public still awaits a type that expands beyond "Good Times's" J.J. and "Baretta's" Rooster. One suggestion is a warm, sensitive Black family man. White producers would probably take up that idea and create a "Father Knows Best" in Black, but he will be no more believable now than Robert Young was then.

### An analysis

## BSM stresses need for input

By **JENNIFER DYKES**  
Staff Writer

The BSM held a general body meeting Wednesday, January 23, in Upendo. Two of the many things stressed were interest and unity. The BSM general body desperately needs these qualities as evidenced by the scanty 39 in attendance; that's a realy minute attendance out of the 220 BSM members, and the proportion gets even more miniscule compared to the 1560 Blacks on campus.

Another point stressed was input, input, INPUT! How can the BSM plan if they get no input as to WHAT they should plan? What does the BSM plan to do should they receive more ideas? Well, a BSM subsidiary, the Central Committee, held a retreat recently and decided that a new department should be formed exclusively for the

purpose of co-ordinating any suggested activities. The title for the person in charge of this department will be Special Projects Co-ordinator. He or she will have as a staff of all dorm representatives, thereby providing a direct line of communication between the students and the co-ordinator.

Also announced was a permanent date for general body meetings. During this semester, meetings will be held on the third Monday of every month in Uperido Lounge at 7:00. It is hoped that a fixed time will help students to plan their activities so that they will be able to increase attendance at future meetings.

With a little perseverance more people suggesting, and a special office to implement the suggestions, Spring Semester 1980 promises busyness, accomplishment, and entertainment. Go to it, BSM!

## NEWS FOCUS:

### Draft concern arises

By **DONNA D. WHITAKER**  
Associate Editor

In view of President Carter's recent announcement in his State of the Union Address of plans to reinstate peacetime draft registration, Americans aged 18-26 must prepare to visit their local draft boards.

Draft registration is just a preparation in case the draft is needed again. The idea is for the United States government to know where you are in case they need your services in a hurry. Then they can just snatch you from your life activities and make you a military person. What fun!

Captain Jack D. Stevens, USN, chairman of the Department of Naval Science (Naval ROTC), said that he felt the announcement was in line based on world events. "It's the kind of thing the country has to go to," he said.

Colonel John W. Wolfe, chairman of Aerospace Studies (Air Force ROTC) said, "I feel that people will take it wrong — it's just a call to register."

Also in his State of the Union Address, Carter vowed to repel any Soviet Union attempt to control the Persian Gulf region "by use of any means necessary."

Okay, so the United States has to start the ole draft boards operating again, because Carter has gone and threatened the Soviet Union.

Although Stevens said that registration does not necessarily mean war, American young people should think ahead. What if the United States did go to war?

Black men should constantly think of answers to this question, because in the past they have been the ones who tended to get drafted more so than others. They did not have the money or connections to avoid the situation.

Black women must now think of answers to the above question in the same light as Black men must, since women could possibly be drafted if the law is amended. President Carter can start registration of men, but must get special permission from Congress to register women.

Also, if women are drafted, a law must be passed that will allow women to fight in a war. As of now, women in the armed forces can train for any type of job except one involving combat skills.

Therefore, men and women could possibly be fighting in a war together, or if not that, they could be working more closely together in the military.

In the past, college students and married men were exempted from the draft, but ROTC chairmen at UNC-CH believe that a more equitable draft system must be implemented in order for the draft to work.

Although Carter can propose plans for registration and draft procedures, Congress is the body that will set the wheels rolling, and if it does pass the proposals, it will take some months before the draft boards will be able to operate.

So, even if there is not a war, Black Americans, as well as others, should prepare to answer to Uncle Sam's call sometime in the future.

## BLACK INK

"The essence of freedom is understanding."

James Alexander Jr. and Theresa Williams  
Co-Editors

Debra Harris  
Managing Editor

Donna D. Whitaker  
Associate Editor

Sharoyne Marshall  
News Editor

Linda Brown  
Features Editor

Frances Silva  
Sports Editor

Allen Johnson  
Arts Editor

Deweese Gilyard  
Photography Editor

Beverly Shepard  
Special Projects Editor

Ricky Bryson  
Business Manager

Rochelle Riley  
Advertising Manager