

# Tony Brown Comments



Tony

## How To Watch White TV

The 10,000-member League of United Latin American Citizens, on behalf of all Hispanic Americans, has filed a discrimination complaint against the nation's top television networks, production studios and advertising agencies.

In a parallel action, November has been declared "Black TV Image Month" and Americans interested in seeing Afro-Americans represented as they are—and not as they live, in the imaginations of bigots or "liberal" producers who know them only as stereotypes and objects of ridicule—are asked to write letters to networks, local TV stations and complain, if necessary and-or congratulate if deserved.

Why all of this fuss over a thing as innocent as comedies on TV, you might be asking, because comedy situations and Black comedic characters on TV were born in the old minstrels. The ancestors of George Jefferson ("The Jeffersons") and J.J. ("Good Times") were born in America's darkest and most racist period.

The "Flip Wilson Show" in the late 60's says Dr. J. Fred MacDonald, noted historian and author of the first book-length study of Afro-Americans and TV—"Blacks and White TV"—was the transition back to over self-hatred. After a period on TV, called the "Golden Age" for Blacks by MacDonald, Flip Wilson reintroduced the race humor of Stepin' Fetchit, Willie Best, Our Gang and Amos And Andy.

"Flip Wilson deals most in race humor. Flip Wilson brings back the disparaging racial stereotypes. I think this is a transition show from the more noble images of the late 60's into race humor or, if you want, into an age of the new minstrelcy, where the old minstrel image has come back. New clothes now. Liberal producers put them out. But they're still drawn from the minstrel show images. 'Good Times' has a J.J. who's basically a doltish coon-type image that harkens back to 'Amos and Andy's' Kingfish, that harkens back to Tambo and Bones of the nineteenth century. We begin to see new little picaninny images. Gary Coleman, as sweet and precocious as he is on television, still is right out of the camp that gave us Buckwheat and Stimey and Farina on the old 'Little Rascals' or 'Our Gang' comedies," Dr. MacDonald told me in Part I of our month long examination on public television of the status of Blacks in white controlled TV, as part of the awareness raising during "Black TV Image Month."

TV is a force so new in our socialization process that we are still trying to measure its impact. In all honesty, nobody really knows exactly what TV has done or is doing to our society. But there are some things that we do know. It would be difficult to underestimate the influence of TV on the American public. As evidence, there are the numbers—the awesome numbers. For example, 98 percent of all homes have TV sets and the average home watches over six hours of TV a day. The average 18-year-old has: watched 22,000 hours of TV as com-

pared to attending only 11,000 hours of school;

- seen 350,000 commercials;
- and Blacks as a whole watch about 10 percent more TV than the general population and are more frequent viewers of non-prime time TV than whites.

On the basis 30 years of available research in "Blacks and Television: A Review of the Research Literature," published in "The Journal of Broadcasting," the following picture of social learning comes into focus:

- Blacks are more likely than whites to use TV as a source of information when buying a product;

- Blacks most often turn to TV rather than newspapers or other people for news of the Black community;

- Black adults prefer programs which feature Blacks;

- Blacks perceive TV as representative of real life more than whites;

- Black children learn aggressive behavior from TV role models and they are more likely to imitate a white role model than a Black one;

- Black adolescents are more likely than whites to use TV to learn how to behave with the opposite sex to develop codes of social conduct. This includes most of what they know about jobs and problem-solving.

The image that Blacks get of them-

selves from TV didn't just happen. Its roots go back long before the advent of the medium of TV. In fact, early TV was almost colorblind.

TV, Blacks thought, could and would reverse these centuries of unjust ridicule and distortion. Did TV miss the boat? The answer is a categorical no.

TV has made tremendous strides in bettering the condition of Afro-Americans. And there is a discernable trend towards a more progressive treatment of Blacks.

But if you ask: Has TV matched performance with potential in understanding its responsibility to project undistorted, honest information as a cure to the legacy of racism? The answer is another categorical no.

Next week: "Goodbye Sergeant Ross?"

"Tony Brown's Journal," the television series, can be seen on public television Thursday, on Channel 42 at 10:30 p.m. It can also be seen on Channel 58 on Sundays, at 6:30 p.m. Please consult listings.

## We Have Nothing To Fear, But Apathy

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50 volunteers has put 500 hours into preparation for the event. Six hundred and fifty tickets have been mailed in advance sales, and about 200 additional tickets are expected to sell at the door.

As a result of sponsoring the rally, the club anticipates making a profit, half of which will go to the campaign of candidate Preston Cornelius.

In addition to the political stumping, the crowd will be entertained by David Erdman, one of Charlotte's and the state's best known Democrats. Erdman is an attorney but his hobby is playing guitar and singing humorous songs at political functions. YD David Parker has written a campaign song about Preston Cornelius and will share the spotlight with Erdman.

After the politicking from the candidates, when the crowd gets down to serious eating, a live bluegrass band will take the stage. Mayor Eddie Knox has arranged for the Carlton Moody Band to entertain.

The Young Democrats are on the move. Collectively, with projects such as the rally and radio ads, and individually as well. Candidates can always count on YDs for help with "grassroots" campaigning, such as placing yard signs and making phone calls.

But it isn't all hard work. The YDs have monthly general meetings planned by the program chairman and often hold educational workshops on campaigning or leadership open to the community. The members enjoy an annual spring party (last April held at the Mayor's home) and a Christmas party.

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