

Harvey Elliott

# Of Black Television

Black America is getting quite an examination this summer by the major television networks. The documentaries of recent weeks (and there will be more, throughout August) are practically the only non-rerun material on television.

ABC is sponsoring *Time For Americans*, a six-part presentation by ABC News, studying aspects of white racism in the areas of industry, urban and suburban life, the mass media, the police and education.

Two weeks ago, the fourth show of this series was shown. Entitled "Prejudice and the Police," it consisted of an open dialogue in Houston, Texas, between the police and the townspeople (nine of each).

The major charges were distrust and discourtesy on both sides, police brutality and lack of cooperation from the community. The Negroes had their questions and the white policemen spent an hour evading the answers.

The cops seemed more concerned with defending the capital-P Police capital-D Department than about trying to achieve any rapport with the blacks. One policeman probably summed up the attitude of the police when he described the conference—not as a "peace talk," not as a "means of understanding," but as "a way to blow off steam."

The only person who could have spoken for both groups was silent. A Negro policeman was present, but he didn't say a word during the entire hour.

On Sunday, July 28, the fifth part of the ABC series will be shown on Channel 5 at 4:30 p.m. "White Racism and Black Education" will examine the Boston School System, spearheaded by Jonathan Kozol, author of "Death At An Early Age," a scathing indictment of the Boston schools and their contribution to "the destruction of the hearts and minds of Negro children."

The following evening, Channel 5 will present "Can White Suburbia Think Black?" at 7:30 p.m. Cameras will focus on an interfaith, interracial group in New Rochelle, N.Y., who will discuss their attitudes toward one another, much in the manner of the earlier police confrontation in Houston.

On another channel and another network, Xerox is sponsoring a CBS series called *Of Black America*. This seven-part unit has already examined the black soldier, and "Black History: Lost, Stolen, or Strayed," both narrated by comedian Bill Cosby. This latter show reviewed the treatment of the Negro in American History texts, the absence of recognition of Africa's contributions to Western culture, and the changing Hollywood stereotype of the Negro from *Amos 'n' Andy* to *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner*.

Next Tuesday night, the fourth part of the series will spotlight "The Negro in Sports and Music." The two-part program will focus on professionals Jackie Robinson, Ray Charles and Aretha Franklin, and their effects on

color barriers in their respective fields.

Is current Negro participation in sports and music tokenism? Or is the color barrier truly broken? Next week's show promises to examine these aspects.

Future programs will deal with:

—An examination of slavery and attitudes established during slavery that have persisted until today, to be televised on August 13.

—A filmed 6-week visit to Ghana by three black Washington, D.C., high school students, in an effort to discover how pertinent Africa is to today in Black America, to be shown on August 20.

—And the final program will deal with black and white attitudes toward each other, due on September 2.

With the exception of the final show, all CBS segments of *Of Black America* will be shown on Tuesday nights, at 11:30 p.m. on Channel 11 (or at 10 p.m., if you can pick up Greensboro's Channel 2).

The two series are certainly the most worth while viewing on summertime television, and most of the earlier programs have been critically acclaimed as "fascinating" and "thought-provoking."

With three shows next week, there's still time to get in on the rest.

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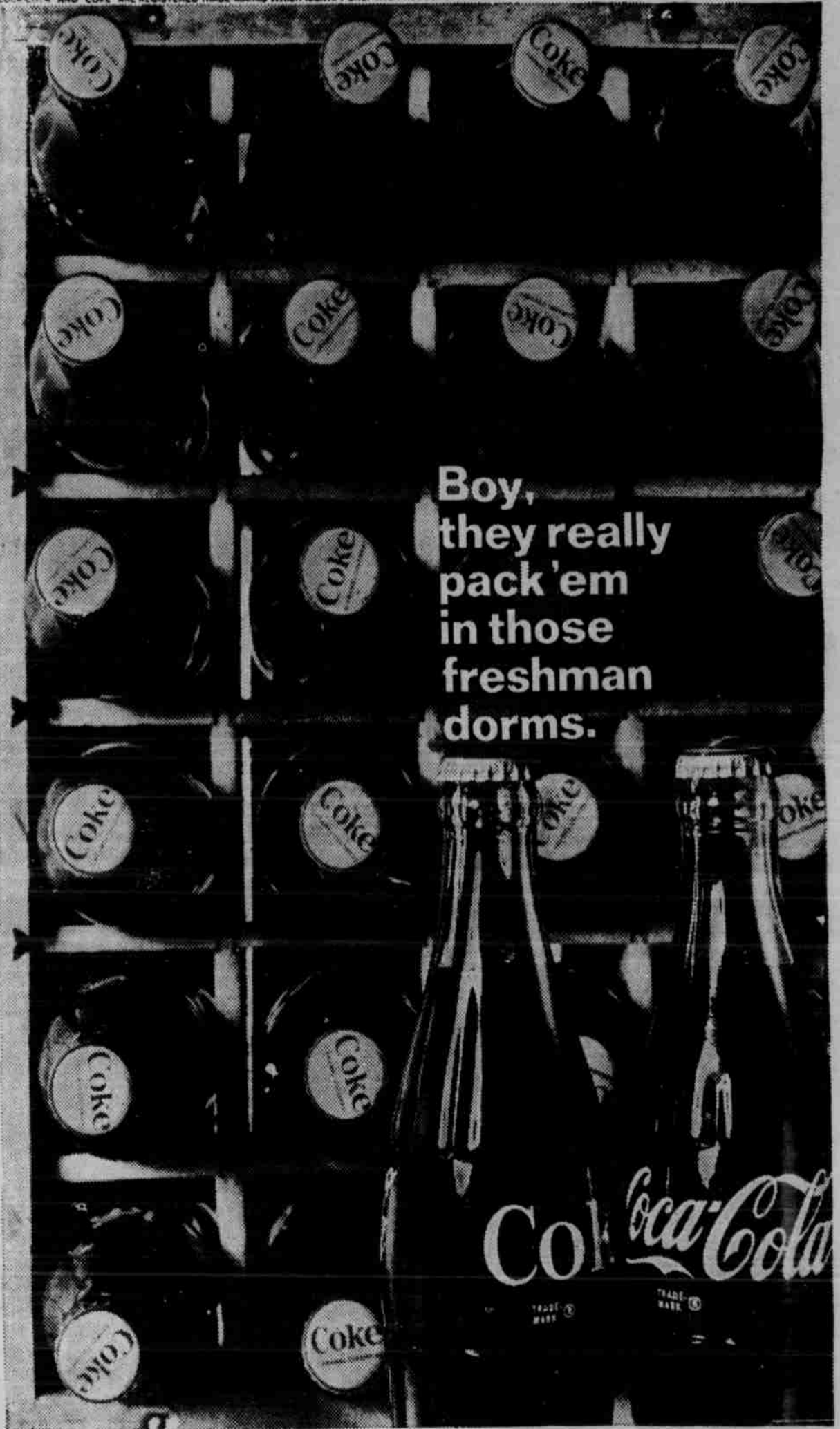
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