

cultural dimensions

Despite our good intentions to be fair and open in this Fathom issue by giving equal coverage to groups traditionally labeled as minorities, we found that even with in-depth interviews and lengthy research, we only skimmed the top of many people's concerns.

We started by talking to informed leaders of minority groups to get ideas for stories that usually are not covered. Then we assigned stories to cover black, Mexican-American, homosexual, and Native American cultural dimensions. We also included an interview with Geraldo Rivera, UPC Talks and Topics Committee's final guest speaker.

Our combined efforts produced articles by Ray Walden and Charlie Krig on the

subject of bilingual education. Kate Gaul looked at the problem of existing myths about gay people. Ron Rockenbach researched racial problems and the effects of those problems on Native Americans. Tam Lee did a personal interview with Sen. Ernie Chambers and Jim Williams spoke with broadcast journalist Geraldo Rivera.

Carol Lincoln, the model for the Fathom cover, spoke about the problems a Native American who comes from a reservation environment faces at UNL.

Lincoln's family lives on the Navajo Indian Reservation near Window Rock, Ariz. She has been attending UNL for a

year and one semester.

Concerning the university, Lincoln said, "Its enlightenment on any minority is so limited. I'd like to see more culture taught and have programs set up where anyone could have their own culture center. We do have a culture center but it's not equipped with the type of things that Native Americans have a knack for. Indian poetry is so artistic and the paintings are so colorful."

"It'd be nice to have more minority teachers than we do," Lincoln said. She also talked about cultural shocks she encountered when she took an anthropology class and learned about the scientific terms which were applied to Native Americans.

She mentioned that she hesitates to say a lot of things because on the reservation

she was always in the majority and that her social life here was also a cultural shock.

"I'm not used to going to bars and I never knew what jazz was or sounded like until I came here."

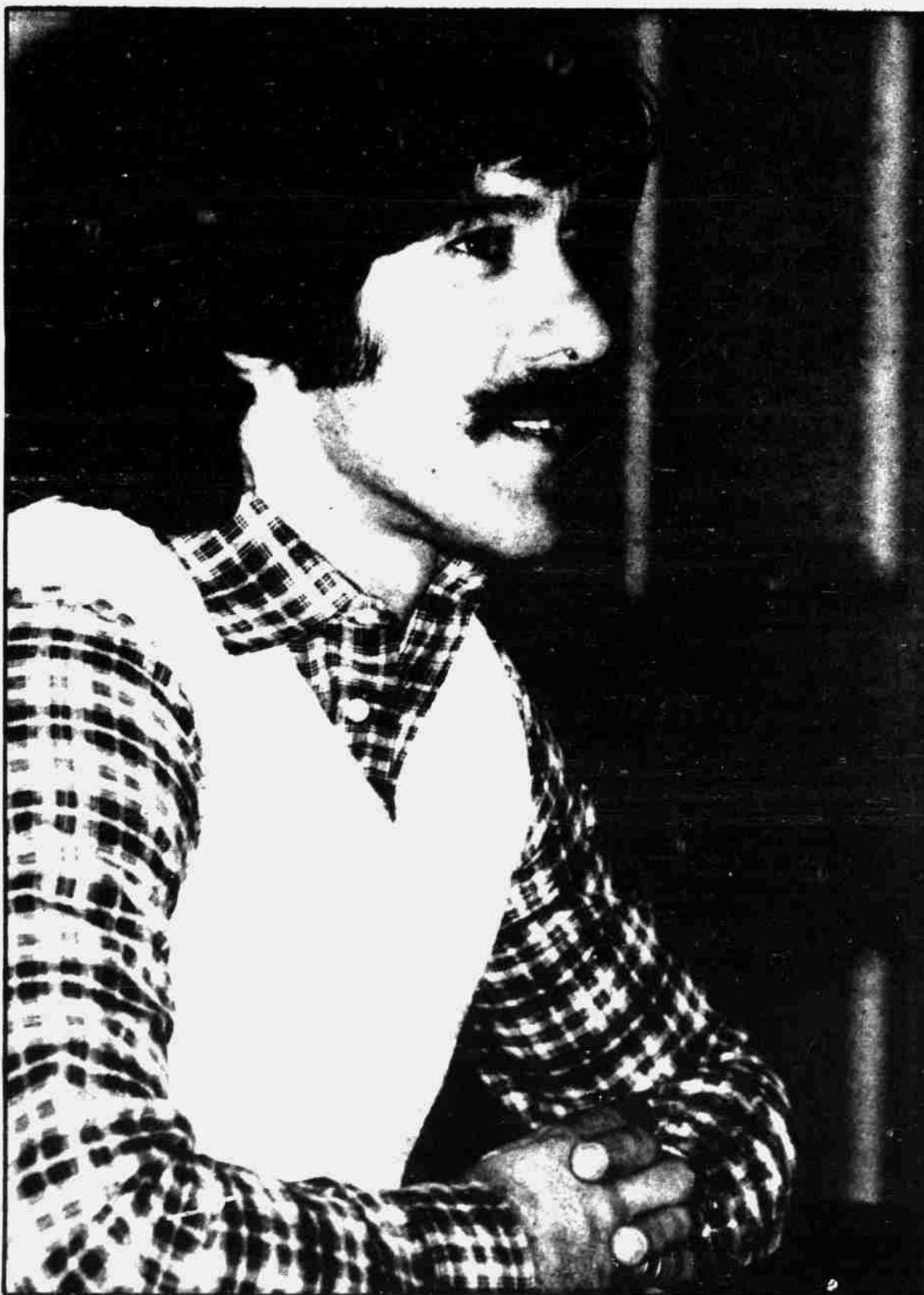
When people leave the reservation most leave to get an education and then come back and help, Lincoln said.

The 21-year-old undeclared major, said she plans to go back to Window Rock and be a silversmith apprentice.

"Many people ask me if I think Native Americans will die out, but they will never die out as long as they still have their mythology and ceremonials that have gone on for thousands of years."

carla engstrom
fathom editor

puerto rican heritage gives 'bundle of experiences'



Geraldo Rivera

Photo by Ted Kirk

By Jim Williams

Geraldo Rivera, star of ABC's "Good Morning America" news program, said his journalism career was helped by the fact that his father was born in Puerto Rico.

"It had a profound effect on my career," Rivera said of his Puerto Rican background. "First of all, it started it. Second of all, it gave me a bundle of experiences . . . a whole different base from which to start."

Rivera, a 34-year-old, New York-born lawyer, said ABC's New York television station asked him to do a news show after he defended members of the Young Lords gang on trial for taking over a church.

Rivera said that the Federal Communications Commission, which regulates television stations, had just handed down guidelines requiring stations to hire more minority-group members. Rivera said he got the job because he was a Puerto Rican who didn't "talk funny" or have frizzy hair.

Rivera said his familiarity with conditions in New York's poor sections helps him get unusual stories. He said that often television news crews usually go only for easy stories on minority groups.

"How they cover minorities, period, is terrible," Rivera said. "I'll give you an example—drug stories. The most accessible drug users are minorities . . . whites are hip enough to know not to talk."

"It's so easy to go into a ghetto and show people in a horrible state, because there are so many of them there."

Rivera said another example of reporters taking the easiest path was news coverage of Israeli-Arab relations. He said the

Israeli viewpoint is often the only one covered because until recently it was much easier for news crews to get into Israel than into Arab countries.

Rivera said he thinks the best way to assure good coverage of minority stories is the total integration of the news media. He said he thought television is already fairly well integrated at the reporter level. But most of the management staffs are still middle-class whites, he said.

Rivera said that minority coverage is getting better for economic reasons. Television and newspapers are discovering that minority readers and viewers are a significant part of the market, he said.

Rivera said he thinks Americans of Mexican and Puerto Rican background are gaining more media attention.

"I think more coverage . . . is being given to that now than ever before," he said. "I would say that the movement of Mexican-Americans for a distinctive cultural identity that is recognized by the majority as something distinctive and unique is growing." He said that examples include bilingual education in New York and the California practice of changing street names back to the original Spanish titles, but that the movement as a whole is under-represented in the media.

"Change takes time, takes effort, takes a lot of things," Rivera said.

Rivera said he became interested in broadcasting because he wanted to use it as a means of social change. He said he thought he was accomplishing it in some ways—whether showing ordinary Americans that in Spanish the G in Geraldo is pronounced as an H, or in uncovering wrongdoing in his investigative reports. But he said he tries to be careful.

"I'm extremely conscious of my own power," he said. "I'm aware of my power and I'm aware of my responsibilities."

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