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Critic sees profit as root of media racism

By John Koopman

Discrimination in television and radio can take many forms.

It can be forcing anchorwomen to wear certain clothes and makeup. It can be teaching a black reporter to "talk white." Or it can be programming which projects negative images about certain racial, sexual or cultural groups.

According to some members of Thursday night's symposium on discrimination in the media, profit motives and the subsequent overuse of media consultants are largely responsible.

Dave Marsh, a rock music critic formerly with *Rolling Stone* magazine, said he rejected the idea of profit as a motivator of radio broadcasting. No one, he said, owns the air waves.

"As I see it, I own one 215 millionth of the airwaves in the country," he said.

Marsh was one of seven panelists at the symposium, sponsored by the UNL Civil Liberties group at the UNL Law College. Others were Dennis Egan, attorney for news anchor Christine Craft; Ben Gray, from KETV Omaha and host of *Kaleidoscope*; Robert McMullen, assistant professor of broadcast journalism at UNL; Tim Munson, a second-year UNL law student; Dean Lambert, music director of KXSS-FM in Lincoln; and Lynn Ireland, folklorist for the Nebraska State Historical Society.

Marsh said media consultants point

to the success of radio personalities such as Gary Dee of Washington, D.C., who is a controversial figure because of many racial and ethnic remarks he had made. Consultants urge stations to hire someone like Dee, Marsh said.

He said consultants today urge stations to program in what he calls "narrowcasting" or segmented broadcasting which caters to a specified audience. The stations work in that manner, calling it Album-Oriented Radio, he said, which should be called Apartheid-Oriented Radio since it effectively separates the listening audience.

"It means that racism is just another way to make a buck," he said.

The most disgusting example of media discrimination is Music Television (MTV), Marsh said. When MTV began broadcasting two years ago, its producers said their idea of rock'n'roll did not include music by black artists. Until a few members of the press demanded that the policy change, he said, the music itself didn't matter, only that the musicians were black.

"It has now changed to the point where if you're Michael Jackson, you might get on," he said.

Marsh explained how rock'n'roll evolved from a mix of white country music and black rhythm and blues and gospel, which helped tear down many racial barriers in the 1950s and '60s.

"It's ironic that the same rock'n'roll music that led the way in bringing

down the walls, is now helping put them back up," he said.

The role of media consultants played an important part in the Christine Craft case as well. As Craft's attorney, Egan won two jury trials for which Craft is to be awarded \$325,000 for fraud. Egan said Craft was fired on the advice of media consultants who supposedly conducted a phone survey of viewers who complained about her looks and the fact that she "wasn't deferential enough to men."

He said Craft also was subjected to a clothing calendar and her hair and makeup were subject to the approval of the station manager.

Egan disputed the consultant's phone survey by citing evidence that Craft's popularity steadily rose during the several months she was there. He said Craft objected to the appearance changes since that was one of the agreements she had made with the station before accepting the job.

McMullen, a broadcast journalism professor who was once station manager of a TV station in Green Bay, Wis., said he thought Craft deserved "everything she gets" because the station management handled the affair so badly. The problem in the Craft case, he said, was that the station was nearly taken over by the consultants — they were given too much leeway. If used properly, McMullen said, media consultants can help a station improve

its ratings.

Gray said the same consultants used by Metromedia, Craft's former employers, were used recently by an Omaha station. He said the consultants urged the station to stop covering city hall and city political functions because "it's boring to the average people; they don't understand it."

"I wish there was some way we could get rid of all the consultants," he said. "I wish we could put them all into a room with a keg of dynamite and blow them all up."

Gray said he had never seen a black consultant and until four years ago, the Nielsen and Arbitron raters never bothered to check the viewing habits of black families.

He also said black reporters are taught to "talk white" and generally appear as white as possible to be accepted by white viewers. He rejected those practices, noting they are discriminatory.

"Television is supposed to inform using the most competent people available," he said. "It shouldn't matter what they look like."

Soviet defector lectures tonight

Dr. Igor Glagolev, a Soviet defector, will discuss the policies of the Chernenko regime at 9 p.m. tonight in the Nebraska Union.

Glagolev published several books while he was associated with the Soviet regime as a consultant with their SALT negotiations team. He has recently published the study "Modern Kremlin Strategy" and is currently preparing a book on the leadership in the Soviet state.

Glagolev's speech is sponsored by the Nebraska Young Americans for Freedom.

In another speech tonight, Newman Dalton, a retired armed forces officer, and Jeff Ross, social action officer at Offutt Air Force Base, will discuss the role of blacks in the military.

The 7:30 p.m. discussion will be in the Nebraska Union Rostrum. It is part of the Black History Month Celebration sponsored by the UNL-Tri-Culture Council.



David Trouba/Daily Nebraskan

Brushing Up

Four-year-old Jorja Morrow, daughter of Ed and Sandy Morrow, 1218 S. 6th St. Lincoln, seems to be giving Tooth Fairy Carrie Simmons the brush-off. Simmons, a senior in dental hygiene, was just one of the attractions at the dental carnival Saturday afternoon at UNL's College of Dentistry.

NSSA conference today, at Capitol

Forty delegates are expected to attend the Nebraska State Student Association's seventh annual conference, which begins 10 a.m. today at the Capitol.

The conference is designed to encourage student organization among the four member NSSA schools, said Deb Chapelle, NSSA executive director.

"NSSA is designed to represent students, not the campuses," Chapelle said. "It is to provide students a perspective through cooperation and coordination of effort."

The need for students to realize

their role to their respective campus is vital, Chapelle said.

"NSSA is a tool for students to utilize," she said.

Jeff Luke of UNL and Andy Cunningham of UNL will present workshops today, while state Sens. Jerome Warner of Waverly and Tom Vickers of Farnam are invited to attend another workshop.

Rick Lombardi, NSSA legislative director, will lead the discussion for the first workshop, which will examine the decision making process.

The conference activities will move

to the St. Paul's United Methodist Church Tuesday. Donald Clifton of Selection Research Inc. will give the keynote address.

NSSA was organized in 1981. Its charter members are UNL and Peru State. UNO and Wayne State joined the next year.

"Every year we get better," Chapelle said. "I see nothing but better times ahead."

The conference workshops are open to the public, Chapelle said. Mayor Roland Luedtke will give the opening proclamation.

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