

Terrence Smith: I'm sorry. Senator, thank you very much. I was just saying, I'd like to redo that piece today. I'd like to update that piece today. I'd like to talk to those people. But I think I would have a hard time selling it to the executive producer and other decision makers at CBS Sunday Morning because like so many broadcasts -- and they have -- they feel the pressures, the economic pressures to build ratings.

And I agree with Ray Suarez's view that there's a fundamental decision that doesn't, that sort of coverage that you just saw on the screen doesn't build an audience and therefore is not to be considered.

I found Ray's really penetrating portrait of the psychological and attitudinal facts that underlie reporting absolutely accurate and I believe every honest producer and editor would recognize it, even though if you ask them, are they racist or prejudiced, they would bridle at the suggestion and insist that they are not, and consciously they are not. The question is are they, is there prejudice engrained in what they are doing or the approach they take and do they understand Colby's real life depiction of poverty and what it means. Do they understand that? I question that. Do they do very much about Greg's citing of the inequalities in newsrooms and the fact that today, there is only some 14 percent of newsrooms are non-white, whereas, as opposed to more than twice that in the population.

Having said all that, coverage of race and inequality in the mainstream U.S. media does exist, but it is largely below the radar. It is very rarely top of the fold. In newspapers and less so, I would say, on television. There are exceptions, Ray cited the New York Times series, How Race is Lived in America, which was terrific and a major contribution and won a Pulitzer Prize. There are other series and projects that you will see largely in print around this country, very little of it really on television. I would say with the exception of the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, the three broadcast networks have largely abandoned the field of coverage of race and inequality in this country. A notable exception is NBC, which has made a sustained commitment to the coverage of New Orleans after the hurricane and continues to feature reports on the NBC Nightly News and other broadcasts on NBC.

So you've raised the question Senator and Alan, why? Well, I think there are some factors you can identify. If all this is true, why is it true? Our national attention and our national resources have been diverted in recent years dramatically by the events of 9/11, by the so-called War on Terrorism, and of course the war in Iraq. The 25-year update of the Kerner Commission Report used a number. It said that to fully address the dimensions of racial prejudice and inequality in America, it would require \$30 billion a year for 10 years or \$300 billion. Just by contrast, the Iraq press last week estimated that the war in Iraq will cost \$1 trillion when all the bills are finally paid. You can do the math.

In the 13 years since that piece appeared and the Commission, the Foundation produced its 25-year report, I would argue that the perception and maybe even the definition of race and inequality in America has changed. Today the debate is focused more on immigration, border security, counter-terrorism, and homeland security. When people talk about minorities today, they are often referring to Hispanics, especially those who are here illegally, the influx of Asian-Americans and more recently, people of Arab extraction and the Muslim religion.

In a curious way African-Americans have receded from the national debate and focus as their numbers, or the growth in their numbers proportionally has declined. For many, many producers in television especially and many editors, the coverage of race and inequality is so last century, not where we want to be.

So what can we do, that's your other question, what can be done to reverse this decline in coverage? Let me hasten to say, I don't know. The Eisenhower Foundation and other well-intentioned groups can continue to focus the spotlight on these issues and on the continuing problems, but in all candor, with limited impact on the public debate. Another round of riots in American cities? No, I don't think anybody would recommend that as a way to get the national attention. What is required is leadership. Leadership not only at the national level, not only do we need the voices that will speak out on these issues in the political class, but we need them as well in the media, we need editors and producers with that kind of consciousness who will address the subject because they know it's important.

I don't know who the national voices might be. You have people of singular achievement, like Colin Powell or Condoleezza Rice, they exist on one level. Is Senator Barack Obama the voice that we've been waiting for? I don't know. But in the meantime, I would argue that an enhanced consciousness among America's editors and publishers would help. Greater minority representation in America's newsrooms might help and all of you might help, but it won't be simple. Thank you.