

*Prejudice: Perceiving and Believing*

16mm film, 28 minutes, color, 1976, \$375.00.

Motivational Media  
8271 Melrose Avenue  
Los Angeles, California 90046  
(213) 653-7291

During the past ten years Edward Asner has become one of the most highly regarded actors in television and cinema. He has seemed best suited to roles which have portrayed power, authority, and usually wisdom. The most impressive of his characters has been his "Lou Grant" (probably due to its long tenure involving two shows) and the public has extended Lou Grant's attributes to Asner, the person. This public respect and confidence is a legitimate recognition of a liberal and concerned human being who has been involved with numerous causes of justice. It would have been difficult to find a more credible choice than Edward Asner to narrate this film.

There are several 16mm films currently on the market which deal with racism and prejudice. Of those which I have seen during the past two years, I find *Prejudice: Perceiving and Believing* the most appealing. It avoids the trap of being too analytical, too explanatory, or of attempting to rationalize or justify prejudicial behavior. Many of us admit to our prejudices or even to racism (in the Patricia Bidol sense) and do not wish to be analyzed, but to be assisted in overcoming these aberrations. In this regard, the film serves us well and also those who have not yet reached this level of consciousness and perceive themselves to be without prejudice and racism.

Though appearing to be relatively low-keyed in its approach, *Prejudice: Perceiving and Believing* has a solid impact. From the outset, Asner's provocative style is only thinly masked. The film opens with a vignette of Michael, a black man, running down a city sidewalk followed by the predictable observations voiced by various community members. A number of true-to-life examples illustrate attitudes toward individual ethnic, racial, or religious groups plus the WASP idea and women. Various observers declare their feelings about the situation viewed in terms of "they" and "them." Asner warns the viewer to be beware of simplistic group perceptions as they are illogical and destructive to personal interactions. The plea is obviously for human evaluation in terms of individual relationships rather than in terms of

stereotypical perceptions.

One of the more hard-hitting portions of the film is a set of images of controversial words, flags, and individuals upon which most of us have long ago formed a fairly fixed opinion. I have prejudicial reactions when I see a Confederate flag, a swastika, Richard Nixon and other images in this film. The challenge is issued by Asner for an open mindedness of which I am not certain I am capable. I must constantly remind myself that it is people who hurt people, not words. pictures, symbols, books, ideas, *ad infinitum*.

*Prejudice: Perceiving and Believing* is a valuable and exciting learning experience. Its level of sophistication is geared to high school through adult audiences but some elementary school youngsters could also deal with the material. As with other presentations on this topic, I would advise pre- and post-discussion sessions.

David N. Mielke  
Appalachian State University