

the staff spells out in every possible way, “blacks and women are worthless human beings.” Our instincts tell us that something is wrong. There is. But there are no signs; there are no symbols of the evil. There is no individual to whom we can point and say, “racism!” Many students, minorities, develop an intolerable bitterness of spirit without ever knowing why. Blacks tend to develop a hatred and fear of whites; women tend to develop a hatred and fear of men; neither group seems to know why it develops the attitudes it does. The idea that blacks and other minorities are worthless human beings grows out of the culture. It is fostered by the culture: those on the bottom must be there because of their own natural inability. So, Deloria would have us redirect our efforts. Instead of demanding that national institutions simply expand to accommodate our interests as we have in the past, we, blacks, women, and other minorities, must force institutions to confront the philosophical-ideological basis of their own goals and subvert western philosophical beliefs into holding that blacks, women, and other minorities are indeed human beings whose value western culture must accept as infinitely worthwhile. It is a difficult task, largely because there are so few blacks and minorities prepared to undertake the confrontation. With its analysis of the causes of racism, Deloria lays the ground work. But we must all do our homework if we are going to ease the intolerable bitterness of spirit of minorities in this society.

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Critique

“The complex of concepts which western peoples use to process data and make decisions are the ultimate enemy of minorities. . . .” As an educator, and especially as one involved in educating journalists, I found myself drawn to Deloria’s statement. My perspective on institutional racism stems primarily from direct participation in both the traditional institution of socialization—education—and what I consider to be the most significant agent of socialization

today—mass media. The challenge inherent in that position is this: If we do not educate non-WASP communicators, if we do not sensitize communicators to non-WASP concerns, there is little chance that the messages communicated will be any less racist (or sexist) than they have been historically. Moreover, and ultimately more important, if such communicators never attain positions of real power within the media (that is, if they do not control the money or content), the institution likely will remain essentially as it is. Considering the industry has revenues exceeding \$30 billion annually and has staunchly resisted change of all sorts, there is little to suggest that these changes will come either quickly or easily.

The ubiquitousness of the media in our everyday lives is a fact. The impact the media have on our lives, both directly and indirectly, takes many shapes. What Walter Lippmann called the “pictures in our heads,” that is our view of reality, today are shaped largely by the media. The media reinforce our stereotypes; the media create stereotypes. Television, especially, because of the way it is used (“If I saw it, it must be real”) has an insidious capacity for creating and fixing images.

Who creates the images we receive from the media? A survey of reporters, photographers, copy editors and news executives on newspapers found:

—Sixty-three percent of the nation’s 1,750 newspapers employ no minority journalists, up from sixty percent the year before.

—About 2,400 minority journalists are underutilized in positions where decisions are made about how the news is selected, edited and displayed.¹ A 1979 study by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission of women and minorities in television found:

—Television drama fails to reflect gender and racial/ethnic composition of the population.

—Stereotyping of minorities in television drama continues.

—Eighty-two percent of television news correspondents are white males.

—White males continue to hold the vast majority of official and manager positions in television news.²

Who will create the media images in the future? The latest annual survey for the Association for Education in Journalism found that minorities were 7.6 percent of the 71,337 persons studying journalism at 166 schools. The breakdown was: 5.7 percent black; 1.4 percent hispanic; and 0.4 percent “other,” mainly Asian.³

The question might be asked: Too little too late? The answer: Let’s hope not. But, with apologies to Susan B. Anthony: As long as the media are controlled by white men, every non-white, non-male communicator must continue to produce messages that reflect white male ideas. And, as long as that continues, the ideas and deepest convictions of others will never get before the public.

Another question must be asked: Can the mass media be changed? The answer: Let’s hope so. Racism in the news (and in entertainment) reflects racism in the mind. Contemporary racism is more subtle than in the days when, for example, newspapers required racial identification or when certain stories were not reported because the participants were blacks. Today, it is the photograph of a free breakfast program that pictures only black youngsters or the caption under a photo of drowned Haitian refugees that says “Free at Last.” As has been noted about sexist language: “Language is all too efficient at revealing ideas we don’t even admit we have.”⁴ So if non-racist media is a goal, then the underlying (and often **unrealized**) racist assumptions must be eliminated—both in the “sender” and the “receiver” of the message. And that is infinitely more difficult than hiring and promoting.

So, in the end, the challenge becomes one of education in the broadest sense of the word. The basic assumptions certainly must be challenged. The old rules are not the only or necessarily the best rules. It is one thing, however, to advocate “an aggressive confrontational dialogue on a philosophical-ideological plane” That is necessary; it is essential that media practitioners and media users not be passive. But dialogue means an exchange of ideas and

opinions. So it is quite another thing when one begins with a goal of "subverting western philosophical beliefs," because such a stance stifles dialogue. And that is neither necessary nor useful.

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NOTES

¹"Minority Employment in Daily Newspapers: A Statistical Analysis." Prepared by Jay T. Harris for the American Society of Newspaper Editors. 1981.

²"Window Dressing on the Set: An Update." A Report of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. 1979.

³Annual Survey by Paul Peterson. *Journalism Educator*. January, 1981.

⁴Jean Ward. "Check Out Your Sexism." *Columbia Journalism Review*. (May/June, 1980) 38-39.

Critique

Vine Deloria's incisive analysis of institutional racism in western culture applies equally well to the related problem of institutional sexism. Both women and minorities—especially individual members of minority racial groups who are immediately recognizable by members of the dominant white culture—belong to a caste rather than a class in western society. As such, we are all subjected by the traditions of white male philosophical and intellectual processes as much as by existing socio-political institutions to the different varieties of exclusion, co-optation and disempowerment that Deloria outlines. In the past decade particularly, women's situation in American political and institutional life has replicated the stasis and frustration experienced by racial minorities for many years preceding.

For example, women continue to attribute our secondary status in American society to irrational sexist beliefs held by