

## TELEVISION PANEL Instigator or Reflector?

### KASSAYE DEMENA



*Secretary General, Union of National Radio and Television Organizations of Africa (URTNA). Mr.*

*Demena has 10 years of experience in television production and has been involved with the Johns Hopkins University in planning radio and television promotion throughout Africa.*

### A MOMENT TO REFLECT AND TO APPRECIATE...

We have had the opportunity over the last several beautiful days to hear many creatively talented individuals speak about their enter-educate experiences. It has been very worthwhile for all of us. The ideas that have been presented in this conference will be very helpful to URTNA in planning radio and television programs throughout Africa.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Johns Hopkins University staff for taking the initiative in organizing this conference. The individuals on today's television panel, entitled "Instigator or Reflector," are in various ways responsible for directly promoting talent in the world of entertainment for social change and will give us many enlightening insights into that world. ■

### THE ENTER-EDUCATE CONFERENCE

SATURDAY, APRIL 1, 1989

Kassaye Demena (CEO, African Radio-TV Organization, Senegal), *Moderator*

Jeffrey Auerbach (Producer, USA)

Elizabeth Okaro (Producer, Nigeria)

Larry Stewart (Producer, USA)

Winifred White (VP of TV Family Programs, USA)

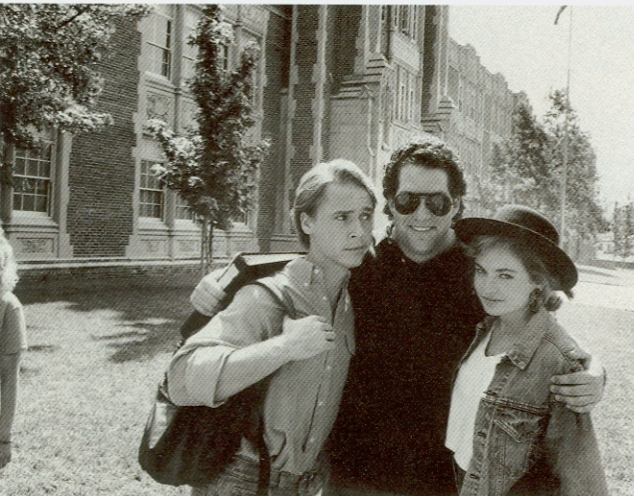
Carl Wiebe (Producer, Egypt)

Yasar Yaser (Producer, Turkey)

## JEFFREY AUERBACH



*Producer. USA. Mr. Auerbach is the writer and supervising producer of the Emmy award winning Babies Having Babies, the CBS after-school special. His most recent production is No Means No, another after-school drama for teenagers.*



*On location with teenage stars of the CBS television after school special, No Means No.*

## TELEVISION AND TEENAGE SEXUALITY

People often ask why I deal with teenage sexual issues.

Sexuality was a big part of my teenage and college years. I grew up in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Kids came from all over the country during school and college breaks and jumped quickly into sexual situations.

I worked at a teen disco. Every night at least one person would tell me, "I just went to the car to fool around, and one thing led to another, and before I knew it I was undressed. I couldn't stop it."

Those years really affected me. I developed these films as a way of doing something about the problem of teen sexuality.

### Dilemmas that Kids Handle Themselves

*No Means No* is CBS's most recent school break special. The protagonist is a high school student who had to deal with his younger sister's crisis. One day, while their mother was away on a business trip, his sister came home and said she had been date raped by a senior classmate of his. It's a double dilemma for the brother because he had been pressuring his own girlfriend to have sex.

The live action drama format of after-school television specials lets us deal with issues in a very entertaining and provocative way. The problems are real. Kids can relate to them. Children spend a lot of time with their peers in and out of school. In both dramas, *No Means No* and *Babies Having Babies*, it's children dealing with children. I specifically try to keep the parents out of the drama until the right moment when they can approach the situation in a non-preachy way.

Kids I meet around the country seem to know the dramas and like to talk about how they were affected by them. The response has been fascinating and gratifying to me. ■

## ELIZABETH OKARO



*Manager of Programmes. Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Enugu, Anambra State, Nigeria. Mrs. Okaro produced In A Lighter Mood, a popular drama series in Nigeria that promotes family planning. The show has been distributed to other African countries and has had a successful run in Kenya and Zimbabwe.*

## THE DRAMA OF TEACHING

- As a student in England, I taught my colleagues about Nigeria through dramatic sketches.
- From 1964-1966, I produced educational TV programs for school children using drama sketches and songs to summarize and reinforce the teaching points.
- As a Refugee Camp Director during the war, I had play sessions with children who followed me around after morning rounds. We learned as we played.

Throughout my career, I have always used entertainment and education together.

### Breaking an Old Taboo with Humor

*In A Lighter Mood* was born in 1981 when the Chief Executive of the Nigerian television station in Enugu asked me to find a program to relieve some of the tension that surrounded political

discussions on television. The format consisted of a drama sketch, a weekly talent search, and jokes.

The use of jokes and humor was very helpful four years later when *In A Lighter Mood* became a pioneer in promoting family planning. Family planning was a very sensitive issue. The subject had been taboo in Nigerian broadcasting.

The Johns Hopkins staff, particularly José Rimon, gave us a lot of help. We set up an advisory committee that included medical personnel to check the content from a health and cultural angle. We held focus group discussions and asked questions about the things that concerned people about family planning:

- **Infidelity.** People feared that those who used family planning had license to do as they pleased;
- **Desire for male children.** People thought that family planning would inhibit the birth of male children;
- **Rumors and fears.** People thought contraceptives could impair their health;
- **Religious beliefs.** People thought that family planning went against religious laws.

#### **Solid Scripts Reflecting People's Concerns**

The first family planning scripts we wrote addressed the focus group responses to these issues. We pretested the scripts to check that the messages were coming across, and we took off.

BB was our key character. In Pidgin English BB stands for Busy Body. He was vocal in an entertaining way. Not

married, he was always into people's private lives making comments like, "Oh dear, if I were you, I wouldn't have so many children. That's why you are always in trouble."

We tried to contrast ideal situations with those that were not so good. "No Boy, No Show" dealt with Nigerians' preference for boy babies. We contrasted one family who only wanted a boy with another which was quite happy about their firstborn baby girl.

#### **Messages that Work**

People watched the show. They liked it. The messages got across.

- Of those surveyed, 61 percent watched TV on a particular night.
- Of those who watched TV, 51 percent saw *In a Lighter Mood*.
- 43 percent of those who watched *In a Lighter Mood* understood the family planning message.
- 73 percent of those who saw *In a Lighter Mood* remembered the location of the family planning service clinic.

Through *In A Lighter Mood*, I have been able to reach a very wide audience. I hope that range can be extended even further through enter-educate programs in Ibo, Yoruba, and Hausa languages, and in Pidgin English for distribution in both Nigeria and other West African countries. ■

*Still from In a Lighter Mood, a popular Nigerian television series that overcame a national taboo by broadcasting family planning messages.*



## **LARRY STEWART**



*Producer. US. Mr. Stewart is the award-winning writer, producer, and director of popular television shows including Bionic Woman, Charlie's Angels, and The Waltons. He is a member of the Entertainment Industry Council, a group of writers, directors, actors, and musicians who are trying to bring social consciousness to the field of entertainment.*

## **HOLLYWOOD GLAMOUR, ALCOHOL ABUSE, AND SOCIAL CONSCIENCE**

Hollywood has always glamorized alcohol. Gloria Swanson always had a glass in her hand. John Wayne chug-a-lugged with the best of them. *MASH*, one of the most popular TV shows of all time, was obsessed with drinking. On every show, a tent full of doctors was always drinking—on 24-hour call in life and death situations.

### **Nobody Thought about Bad Messages until...**

A curious thing happened. Complaints came in from the black community that the excessive drinking of the leading

character of the TV show, *The Jeffersons*, was sending bad messages to young blacks who watched the show.

Producer Norman Lear listened carefully and got some advice and guidelines from Drs. Breed and Defoe, two psychologists who had studied the effects of the media's portrayal of alcohol. Other producers, including the producer of *MASH*, heard about the guidelines and adopted them for their shows as well.

In 1982, several major motion picture stars were involved in alcohol-related accidents. Mary Martin was seriously injured in a car crash in which her husband and actress Janet Gainor were killed. Two months later Bill Holden and Natalie Wood died in separate alcohol-related incidents.

#### **People Began to Wonder...**

A lot of people began to wonder if we weren't sending out some pretty bad messages to the 140 million Americans who watch television every week and to those who flock to our motion pictures. The Caucus of Producers, Writers, and Directors, to which I belonged, formulated a white paper and sent it to 10,000 of our peers along with the Breed and Defoe guidelines.

We didn't say to them, "Do this!" We said, "If you think we're on the right track, join us and follow some of these guidelines. They may help." Peers talking to peers.

#### **So We Cut Back Alcohol Portrayal**

Within two years we had made an impact. The Brewery Association which had been monitoring alcohol portrayal during prime time informed us that the use of alcohol on TV had been cut back by 22 hours. *Dallas* alone cut back alcohol portrayal by 70 percent.

#### **The Entertainment Industry Unites to Fight Drugs and Alcohol**

In 1983, a couple of hundred producers, writers, directors, actors, musicians, and some sports people banded together to address alcohol and drug addiction problems. We called our-

selves the Entertainment Industry Council. We produced mostly PSAs for kids that featured celebrities with whom kids could identify positively.

- *Stop the Madness* is a rock video with about 60 stars. From it was spun a prime time CBS campaign that has run every night for the last three years. The first two years spotlighted drugs, now AIDS.

- *Buckle Up* is a seat belt program with a seat belt lesson plan that we distribute for free to 163 school districts around the country.

- *Strive for Excellence* is a literacy campaign that focusses on the lack of self-esteem that causes people to turn to drugs and alcohol.

#### **The Consequences of Excess**

The kind of message we want to get to writers and producers is that if you are going to deal with difficult issues—alcohol, drugs—do it in a responsible way. In 1982 we wrote about the difficulties of recovering from alcoholism. There are no miraculous recoveries.

We're trying now to raise awareness about the consequences of excess. To encourage producers to include consequences for drug and alcohol abuse, we'd like to attach an SA to film ratings that points out that alcohol or drug use does have consequences. If you have kids driving down the street, drinking beer and screaming, let them have an accident, give them a ticket, let them get grounded. Give them a consequence.

It's not that hard to do. In 1985 in the film, *The Initiation*, I added a scene with a comatose sorority sister at the end of a drunken sorority/fraternity party to underscore the consequence of excessive drinking.

#### **Entertainment and Health: Working with the Experts in the Field**

It took a few years to get the entertainment industry together to make inroads in promoting social awareness, but finally we got smart. Now, we turn to health professionals to advise us. We

developed a white paper called "Let's Have *None* for the Road" to promote the responsible host and the designated driver at Christmastime, and we're doing a Prom Night alcohol abuse campaign in June. We also work with the National Institute of Drug Abuse, the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention and the US Highway and Traffic Safety Commission through grants.

#### **The Hollywood Community: Just Down Home Folks**

Hollywood is a bedroom community—in the best sense of the word. It's made up of mothers, fathers, grandparents. We care about the audiences we serve and entertain. I think we are beginning to prove it everyday through the work that such organizations as the Entertainment Industry Council are doing and through the responses that we are getting from the industry. ■



## WINIFRED WHITE



*Vice President of Family Programs, NBC. Ms. White is responsible for Saturday morning cartoons, drop-in programming consisting of one to two minute educational messages, and primetime family specials that are aired four or five times a year.*

## PULLING IN THE NUMBERS

### TV Programming for a Culturally Diverse Mass Audience

The goal of commercial television is to get the largest possible audience. There is a continual conflict between what will attract a mass audience and what we think is responsible, enlightening programming. The biggest problem is that so many social issues clash with the value system of particular families or particular groups that are part of the mass audiences.

### Trying to Educate Without Scaring People Away

Children may learn from television, but they primarily turn to television for entertainment. It is difficult to hold a children's audience above the age of five if they even suspect that you are trying to teach them something.

About four or five times a year NBC airs primetime Family Specials that are intended for parents and children to watch together. The emphasis is on entertainment, but there is usually a social

message that the families can talk about.

A number of these programs have received positive critical acclaim, but the ratings showed that the audiences did not watch them.

- *The Place at the Table* was about poor children in America and the shame associated with being poor. The message was that poverty is everybody's responsibility. The show received a lot of critical acclaim. It won a lot of awards. But the ratings weren't so great.

- *Donahue and Kids* was an uplifting program about children with terminal cancer who overcame the odds. We got lots of letters from people who were pleased that the program was uplifting and not depressing and asked when we would put it on again. We didn't. The audience had not been large enough the first time.

### Sneaking Social Messages into Good Story-Telling

Family programs don't usually compete well against programs such as *Miami Vice*, or *Dynasty*, or *Growing Pains*. Even though parents and teachers ask for more programming for families, something in the American mind clicks and says, "If this is a family program, it must be good for me. Therefore, I am not sure that I want to watch it."

One program that did succeed in sneaking in a social message was not a children's program. A few years ago, NBC produced *An Early Frost*, a special about a young man with AIDS. The advertisers balked. NBC had to mount a major effort to convince advertisers that the show was worth putting on. The cast was well-respected and star-laden, Gina Rowlands, Ben Gazzard, Aidan Quinn. The movie was well done, and a great deal of time and research had gone into the production.

Commercial TV is not able to program such controversial movies that often. The time, effort and money that goes into them is too great.

## Dropping in Non-Controversial Issues

Non-controversial social issues are much easier for commercial networks to deal with. One of our drop-in programs, called *One To Grow On*, is a 90-second message repeated five times throughout Saturday morning children's programming. The format is dramatic—kids with a problem. Just as they get to the problem, a celebrity comes on to stop the action. One drop-in is about a four year-old girl lost in a shopping center, crying. The celebrity comes on and tells her what to do. "Go to a salesperson, find a policeman who will help you find your mother."

Shortly after the program was aired we got a letter from a rural woman whose four year-old son had known what to do when he got lost in an unfamiliar shopping center while visiting city relatives because he had seen *One to Grow On*.

We know we can reach children with these kinds of non-controversial messages. Our problem is communicating controversial messages, such as teen pregnancy and drugs, particularly to children as young as five or six. What message can you give that will not conflict with the many cultural groups in our country? How do you tell a kid not to take drugs without showing him how to take drugs? And how do we get advertisers to support shows that have social or controversial programming? ■



*"One family's courage in facing the shame of being poor in America" was the theme of the NBC television drama, A Place at the Table, which starred David Morse (left and right), Susan Dey (right), and Lukas Haas (far left).*

## CARL WIEBE



*Producer, Telecine International. Egypt. Mr. Wiebe is producing, with a team of Egyptian professionals, a series of television programs in Arabic for children which convey social skills and promote social understanding.*

### INSPIRING CHILDREN IN THE MIDDLE EAST

My background is in commercial television. I became involved with the Arabic Children's Series as part of a creative team that wanted to have a positive influence on Middle Eastern society. Our goal is to produce a program that excites children.

We decided to create an ongoing television series that could deal with issues that are important in the Middle

East and which would involve the child's whole life: social skills, interaction within families, the impact and consequences of family size, and health issues. We wanted as well to encourage creativity in music and the other arts. We wanted to deal with such issues as what it is like to be handicapped, how society relates to the handicapped, and the career opportunities available to the handicapped.

### Tapping Top-Quality Commercial Resources

One of our challenges was to create a storyline that would work in Egypt and be acceptable among the diverse cultures and lifestyles that encompass Gulf countries and some North African countries as well. We felt that puppets would allow the storyline to work across the different Arab cultures.

A top-quality commercial crew was a must, so we tapped some of the leading Arab artists to write and perform the programs and songs. As we finalize the production of four pilot programs for pretesting, the initial response from educators and the commercial industry in the Middle East has been quite positive.

### Commercial Practices vs Social Messages

Generally, commercial people are more interested in the popularity of a program and consequently the money that the program will bring in. The social communicators, on the other hand, are mostly interested in getting the right social message across to cause changes in behavior. The scenario goes something like this:

#### Writer/Director Team:

Okay, we've got a great script. It looks like it's going to work and be popular. Let's shoot.

#### Social Communicator:

Hold it. Hold it. It looks very good. I really like it, but first we have to take it to our

review committee. We have to get it translated and sent back to the funding organization in the States (or wherever) to get their input. We'll get back to you in a few weeks.

By the time the script comes back, it's really a few *months*. The creative people are now frustrated. Then, these professionals in their industry are usually asked to change *their* script to fit the message.

At times, maybe the message would get across better their way. Sometimes creative people have a better pulse on society.

We need to be careful, however, to listen to both sides and to integrate social and development communication with entertainment.

### The Three Potential Stumbling Blocks of Social Programming

We found that at the start of developing a program, you need to expect and plan for at least three potential stumbling blocks.

- **More Time for Production.** For example, the Music for Young People Project in Latin America took three and a half years from beginning to end. From a commercial standpoint, that's a long time.

- **More Money.** If the production is to compete with local and international productions that come into our countries, it must be top quality.

- **Frustrations of Creative People.** A plan should be made to deal with the frustrations inherent in the process of making productions socially relevant.

We are finding, however, that these are challenges which can be overcome as we continue to produce programs that have a positive impact on Middle Eastern society. ■



*Closeup of puppets from the Egypt-based Telecine International television series for children, Farm of Dreams.*

## YASAR YASER



*Executive Director, Turkish Family Health and Planning Foundation. Mr. Yaser has successfully produced the first multi-media communication campaign to promote family planning in Turkey.*

### **TURKISH PEOPLE DON'T WANT MANY CHILDREN**

If there is no moral, religious or cultural opposition to family planning in Turkey, why do couples who want only two children end up having six? Couples do not know about modern contraceptives nor do they know where to go for them.

According to a 1983 survey, the average number of children desired by Turkish couples is 2.5. The population of Turkey grows by one million every year. At this rate Turkey will double its population in 33 years putting an even greater strain on the country's ability to provide health, housing and education for its people.

#### **The Turkish 'Mr. Rockefeller' Takes Action**

I returned to Turkey, after an eight-year stay in London, at the request of Mr. Vehbi Koc, Turkey's "Mr. Rockefeller." At age 85, Mr. Koc decided to move

ahead with population programs, and in 1985, he established the Turkish Family Health and Planning Foundation (TFHPPF).

We contacted Johns Hopkins University for technical assistance in carrying out a multi-media communication campaign to promote family planning and male responsibility. It was the first campaign of its kind in Turkey.

#### **We Started with a Research Base...**

The project was very much research-oriented from the start. From baseline surveys with about 35 focus groups, we were able to figure out what direction to go in and what audience to address.

Wherever possible we used well known stars to attract people's interest.

#### **And Entertained with TV Spots...**

When we found out that TV spots would reach lots of people we produced five educational spots and five promotional spots and broadcast them 145 times over a three month period.

"What are you doing?" asks a girl of a man who has inherited thousands of acres of land from his grandfather. "I am distributing the land that is left to my six children," he responds. In six flower pots!

This universal message which emphasizes land fragmentation due to high population growth received the approval of most viewers.

#### **TV Dramas...**

We learned that people responded to drama and produced two for TV:

- *Sparrows Don't Migrate* is a three episode mini-drama about a family that seeks work in the city, only to return to the village when city life proves too difficult. It was viewed by 20 million people.
- *A Child is Crying There*, a 42-minute TV drama that addresses the economic and social issues facing growing families, was seen by 25 million people.

#### **Radio Programs...**

We discovered that villagers love to listen to their transistors, especially during harvest time. So we produced *Ke-*

*ser's Trial*, a radio theatre drama heard by 10 million villagers in October 1988, and eight radio spots for daily broadcast during December 1988.

#### **And Backup Educational Materials**

The campaign was launched with a symposium on population awareness to back up the enter-educate materials. We also produced posters, brochures, calendars, and a photo exhibit. The Ministry of Health is reproducing a thousand copies of a Hopkins-supported training movie.

#### **We Reached Many People...**

Post surveys showed that both the drama episodes and the TV spots had excellent ratings.

- More than half of Turkey's adult population saw *Sparrows Don't Migrate*. Eighty-three percent of 18 million viewers described the stories correctly and understood the messages.
- The TV spots were recognized by 80 percent of viewers of which 90 percent approved of the messages.
- The preliminary evaluation showed that almost 90 percent of the target audience had been reached.

#### **Saved Several Million Dollars...**

We estimated that newspaper space and airtime donated to the project would have cost 2 million dollars. To broadcast the TV spots alone would have cost 1.2 million dollars—about six times more than the Hopkins budget.

#### **And Increased Clinic Attendance and User Rates**

The most important indicator of the project's success is that clinic records showed an increase in clinic attendance and contraceptive acceptance at the end of the three-month intensive campaign period. ■