

THE HUMANITAS DREAM
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We celebrate the fifteenth birthday of HUMANITAS today. But on a deeper and more universal level, we celebrate the power which television had put into our hands to enrich our viewers, to help them grow and develop and become the fully aware, sovereignly free, joyfully loving human beings God made us to be.

And in a more immediate and personal way, we celebrate today the craft and the sensitivity - the facility for language and the insight into character - the boldness of vision and the inventiveness of story - the willingness to risk, to try things, even to fail and the fierce refusal to compromise, either the truth or oneself - which characterizes the finalists in this room this afternoon. You have enriched your viewers while you have entertained them. You have realized the humanizing potential of television. You are the pride of our industry.

I am delighted to see some old friends among the finalists today - Marshall Herskovitz and Ed Zwick who won the long form HUMANITAS PRIZE in 1983 for their Special Bulletin. And John Sacret Young, who won the long form prize in 1978 for his Special Olympics. Now they have created two of the most ground breaking and humanistic hour series on the air. John Markus, who has won two previous HUMANITAS PRIZES for Bill Cosby Shows and Marcy Carsey and Tom Werner who have produced those episodes and Alan Gansberg who was nominated in 1986 for his after school special, "Have you Tried Talking to Patty?"

To all of you - old friends and new ones - congratulations.

In the fifteen years of its life HUMANITAS has become more than a prize or an institution. It has become a movement in the entertainment community, a gathering together of all those who care about their viewers and are committed to their enrichment, a community of writers, directors, producers, actors and network executives who work at sharing human values with their audiences.

When I say human values, I mean human dignity and all that flows from it. I mean self affirmation. I mean the search for meaning. I mean fidelity to the truth. I mean freedom and responsibility. I mean courage and self discipline. I mean self possession and self giving. I mean love and compassion and respect for other people. I mean reverence for human life wherever it is to be found. I mean justice in human society. And I mean peace in the world.

There is nothing controversial about these values. No religious or ethnic group has a monopoly on them. Thank God, in America, there is a consensus in support of them. They are as old as the book of Genesis and as relevant as the U.N. declaration of human rights. No one denies these values. Everybody pays lip service to them. Yet incorporating them into our daily lives is no laughing matter.

It's harder still to probe the depths of the human and grapple with the transcendent mystery we find within ourselves and out of that grappling to create stories which will communicate those human values in an entertaining way. Yet that is precisely what the members of the Humanitas movement have set out to do.

We feel the viewing public has been good to us. They give us their time. They give us their attention. In a very real sense, they give us their money. We feel we owe them something in return.

Certainly we owe them entertainment. But we owe them something more. We owe them stories that compress reality and distill human life so as to reveal its meaning, stories that penetrate the surface and grapple with the deep complexity of things. We owe them some little piece of the truth about what it means to be a human being, a glimpse of the heights to which our freedom calls us and of the abysses into which we can sink by abusing it, we owe them some experience of the deep humanness that makes all of us - black, brown, yellow and pink, - brothers and sisters of one another. We owe them some inkling of the dark yet wondrous mystery in which we live and move and have our being, some resonance of that mysterious symphony that permeates all of creation and to which all of us, in one way or another, try to dance.

There are few politicians or preachers who have the kind of moral influence we in the creative community have. All of the recent studies agree. In the United States only the human family itself surpasses TV's capacity to communicate values, form consciences and motivate human behavior. The church in this field is a distant third and the school a still more distant fourth.

In the area of values and morality, our power is tremendous. And it is not limited to this country. As our world becomes more and more interdependent our influence has become world wide. The Japanese may make better TV sets and the Germans may make better cars. But we are the acknowledged leaders in the area of popular entertainment.

Seventy five percent of the media played in most of the world originates in Los Angeles. In Caracas and Yohohama, Bangkok and Rio, Nairobi and Tel Aviv, Damascus and Hamburg

young people get their role models from American TV. That's scary. We have tremendous power. Yet with this power comes great responsibility. We owe our viewers.

It is so easy to project a world of illusion and help our viewers run from life. It is much harder to grapple with the hard edges of reality and give our viewers some perspective on it.

It is easy to massage their senses. It is harder to reach for the depths where they live, feeding their minds, challenging their wills.

It is easy to shock them with human depravity. It is much more difficult to lift them up, warm their hearts and energize their souls.

It is harder. But it can be done. You have proven that.

We owe our viewers no less.

Already we wrestle with the demands of our consciences in this regard.

And we know that on some future day we will stand before the judgment seat of humanity and scrutinize ourselves in the eyes of an unconditionally loving God as we struggle to give an accounting of our own stewardship. How have we used the great power which has been entrusted to us? What have we done for our brothers and sisters on the other side of the tube? Have we responded to what is best in them? Or have we pandered to what is worst? Are they more, or less, human, for having given us their time and attention?

To us to whom so much has been given, much shall be expected.

The Board of Directors of the HUMANITAS PRIZE organization has in recent months done some soul searching of its own. We have tried to evaluate the fifteen years of our history, look at the needs of our industry and draw up plans to respond to them.

We are very aware that we did not create the moral sensitivity, the concern for human values, the commitment to share them that characterizes the people in the Humanitas movement.

But we like to think we have given them needed recognition and support, a symbol about which to congregate and a banner behind which to march.

And we would like to think that loud and clear we have said to the entire entertainment community - and to a lesser

extent, to the viewing public as well - that good stories must be about something, they must explore some facet of the human situation, they presuppose a moral point of view, that its not enough to entertain - that it's also necessary to enlighten and challenge and motivate - in a word, to enrich, that audience enrichment and audience entertainment are not only not incompatible but mutually presuppose each other. That entertainment programming that does not also enrich its viewers is like a stew without meat. It's flat and tasteless. That audience enrichment - the communication of humanistic values - is of the essence of the creative process. It is our reason for being, why we do what we do.

In this soul searching the HUMANITAS Board of Directors have taken a hard and honest look at our industry. We are in a period of transition and we struggle with serious problems, both creative and economic.

The mass audience is fragmenting. Cable, independent stations and VCR's have siphoned off considerable portions of it. All three networks have changed ownership in recent years. Those who bought them have incurred huge debts in the process. That means they are now saddled with staggering interest payments.

In some quarters this has created a preoccupation with the bottom line that generates fear, stifles creativity and squeezes out value oriented programming. The tension between the creative and the economic is intrinsic to our business. But the situation seems worse now. Much worse.

And it does not help when brush fire wars break out in our own community, one studio making war on another.

Is there a connection between these problems and the failure of the HUMANITAS directors and trustees this year to find a long form program that they felt possessed the artistic excellence and humanistic impact which the Prize presupposes? I hope not. But I'm not so sure.

The situation is serious enough that the Board of Directors of the HUMANITAS PRIZE think concerted action is called for. We have looked to the future and we have made some plans. Like Martin Luther King, we have a dream, a dream that will probably take ten years to implement, but which we intend to work at immediately.

First, we intend to expand the educational component of our program. We have been conducting three seminars a year for W.G.A. members on the incorporation of human values into entertainment programming. As soon as feasible we hope to expand this to a ten week course on values and creative writing. In addition we hope to launch a series of all day workshops for beginning writers to be given by master

writers. We also hope to facilitate the formation of writers support groups and to arrange for a mentoing program for novice writers.

Does this sound ambitious? It is. But it also is very necessary. Many beginning writers find the system bruising. They sometimes get so wounded and discouraged that they are tempted to jettison their values and abandon their ideals. We hope this expanded program will give them the support they need. We know we can reasonably expect these writers to enrich their audiences only if we have first done what we can to enrich them.

Second, we hope to create two new Humanitas prizes - one for PBS/Cable, one for feature films. The need for these is, I think, obvious. The cable networks are now pulling sizeable audiences and PBS is doing superb programming, yet both confront problems different from the networks. Thus we feel they should have a prize of their own.

The same can be said for feature films. They are indeed the great contemporary art form. They are attracting huge audiences. We want to do what we can to encourage their writers to elevate their moral tone and increase their humanistic impact. We think a HUMANITAS PRIZE in this area will help.

Third, we want to significantly increase the monetary size of the HUMANITAS PRIZES, so that they stay current with inflation and are comparable in aggregate to the Nobel, Templeton and McArthur Prizes.

Hollywood is not a chintzy community and I for one do not think we should be chintzy with this community's writers, especially when the communication of values is at stake.

This dream of expanding our educational programs and support systems for writers, creating new HUMANITAS PRIZES for PBS/Cable and Features, and increasing the monetary size of the present prizes will of course cost money.

We now have a million dollar endowment. To implement this program, the Board has decided to attempt to expand our endowment to five million dollars.

Is this possible? We think so. We have entered into conversation with a number of independent producers and production companies and their response has been generous indeed.

Marcy Carsey has made a ten year pledge of \$250,000.

Grant Tinker has made a ten year pledge of \$250,000.

Norman Lear has made a ten year pledge of \$250,000.

A producer who has requested anonymity has also made a 10 year pledge of \$250,000.

Alan Landburg has pledged \$200,000.

David Milch has pledged \$50,000.

And The Finnegan/ Pinchuk Company has pledged \$25,000.

In the months ahead, we will be contacting the remaining independents. We will also be approaching the major studios and the networks. I am optimistic. There seems a general awareness that this business must help this business to fulfill its humanizing responsibilities to the viewing public and that the HUMANITAS PRIZE is an effective and cost efficient way of furthering this process.

Edmund Burke once said "The only thing that it takes for the triumph of evil in the world is for good men to do nothing."

We in the HUMANITAS movement - all of you - do not intend to do nothing.

We will stretch our talents. We will strive for excellence.

We will struggle for the truth. We will fight for what is right.

We will do all we can to make shows that enrich our viewers. We will help our colleagues do the same.

We will try to be successful. But in the final analysis we know that we have not been called to success. We are called to be faithful - faithful to the truth as we see it, faithful to ourselves, the best in ourselves, faithful to our viewers, to what they need, what they deserve from us.

It is a long and arduous process but we are sustained by the faith and courage of that old black spiritual:

We are not alone
 We shall walk hand in hand
 We shall live in peace
 We shall all be free
 The truth will make us free
 The Lord will see us through
 Oh deep in my heart
 I do believe
 We shall overcome
 We shall overcome someday.