

MUSEUM OF BROADCAST COMMUNICATIONS

Encyclopedia of
TELEVISION

SECOND EDITION

Volume 4
S-Z
INDEX

Horace Newcomb
EDITOR

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Alphabetical List of Entries

Volume 1

Abbensetts, Michael
Abbott, Paul
ABC Family Channel
Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN)
Absolutely Fabulous
A.C. Nielsen Company
Academy of Television Arts and Sciences
Action/Adventure Programs
Action for Children's Television
Activist Television
Adaptations
Advanced Television Systems Committee
Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet, The
Advertising
Advertising Agency
Advertising, Company Voice
Advocacy Groups
Aesthetics, Television
Africa, Sub-Saharan
Ailes, Roger
Alcoa Hour, The
Alda, Alan
Alfred Hitchcock Presents
Alice
All Channel Legislation
All in the Family
Allen, Debbie
Allen, Fred
Allen, Gracie
Allen, Steve
Alliance Atlantis Communications
Allison, Fran
Allocation
Ally McBeal
Almond, Paul
Altman, Robert
Amen
American Bandstand
American Broadcasting Company (ABC)
American Forces Radio and Television Service
American Movie Classics
American Women in Radio and Television
Americanization
America's Funniest Home Videos
America's Most Wanted
Amerika
Amos 'n' Andy
Anchor
Ancier, Garth
Ancillary Markets
Andy Griffith Show, The
Animal Planet
Anne of Green Gables
Annenberg, Walter
Anthology Drama
Arbitron
Archives for Television Materials
Argentina
Arledge, Roone
Armstrong Circle Theatre
Army-McCarthy Hearings
Arnaz, Desi
Arsenio Hall Show, The
Arthur, Beatrice
Arthur Godfrey Shows (Various)
Arts and Entertainment
Ascent of Man, The
Asner, Ed
Asper, Izzy
Association of Independent Television Stations / Association of Local Television Stations
Atkinson, Rowan
Attenborough, David
Aubrey, James T.
Audience Research: Cultivation Analysis
Audience Research: Effects Analysis
Audience Research: Industry and Market Analysis
Audience Research: Overview
Audience Research: Reception Analysis
Auf Wiedersehen, Pet
Australia
Australian Production Companies

2000 Presidential Election Coverage

Although network television projections had prematurely awarded New Mexico to Democratic candidate Al Gore, the epicenter of controversy surrounding electronic media coverage on the night of November 7, 2000 consisted of two consecutive pronouncements—both of them wrong—awarding Florida, and ultimately the presidency, first to Gore, and then to George W. Bush. In one of the tightest presidential elections in American history, NBC declared Gore the victor at 7:49 P.M. EST based on Voter News Service (VNS) tabulations of exit polls and early precinct totals in Florida. Within minutes, CBS, CNN, FOX, ABC, and VNS itself followed suit, and declared Gore the winner. At 9:38 P.M., however, VNS retracted its projection for Florida after CNN discovered a tabulation error that mistakenly gave Gore a 96 percent margin of victory in the state's historically conservative Duval County. CNN withdrew its call for Gore at 9:45 P.M., and within minutes, CBS, FOX, and ABC followed suit. Then, at 2:16 A.M., under the leadership of Bush's first cousin John Ellis, the election coverage team for the Fox News Network declared Bush the winner. Within minutes, ABC, CBS, CNN, and NBC followed suit.

Ending weeks of litigating, political maneuvering, and heated public denunciations of so-called liberal media bias, the U.S. Supreme Court ultimately intervened in the election on December 12, 2000, voting 5-4 to bar a recount of the Florida vote and thus effectively anointing Bush president. Despite losing the popular vote to Gore by more than half a million votes, Bush received 271 electoral college votes to Gore's 267, the narrowest margin since 1876, when Rutherford B. Hayes, after disputed recounts in four states, beat Samuel J. Tilden by a single electoral vote.

The evening topped off a campaign that might otherwise have been more memorable for the satirical impersonations of Will Ferrell as Bush and Darrell Hammond as Gore on the popular late-night comedy-variety show *Saturday Night Live*. Despite early tempes involving allegedly subliminal Republican campaign ads ("RATS" briefly appeared in one television advertisement for Bush as part of an animated special effect flying the word "DEMOCRATS" into the shot) and an instance when Bush was caught on tape calling *New York Times* reporter Adam Clymer an obscene term, the election seemed primarily notable for the lackadaisical voter response it generated.

After November 7, a new iconography for the presidential campaign emerged on television. Dan Rather infamously boasted early in the evening to CBS viewers "if we say somebody's carried the state, you can take that to the bank. Book it!" After the predictions seemed less invincible, NBC political analyst Tim Russert made the low-tech combination of personal whiteboard and red dry erase marker a household image. The cable channel C-SPAN, normally broadcasting hearings and Congressional votes to fulfill its public affairs programming mandate, featured reruns of the *Saturday Night Live* sketches. The image of wide-eyed Judge Robert Rosenberg inspecting questionable Broward County ballots behind a magnifying glass became a lightning rod for all that was wrong with the voting and recount process in Florida.

Rather than pursue disturbing, historic, and ongoing irregularities in the voting process, such as the deliberate purging of black voters from Florida's voter rolls, subsequent Congressional hearings focused on television coverage of election night. Billy Tauzin (R-LA), chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, set the tone of the investigation in the months leading up to the February 14, 2001, hearings when he accused the networks of harboring "probable bias" in painting "a very disturbing picture," in which television executives wanted the country to believe "that Al Gore was sweeping the country." Hauling the executives of FOX, CBS, CNN, NBC, and the Voter News Service before Congress, Tauzin proceeded to soften his charges of network bias. Network executives, in turn, proceeded to blame Voter News Service as the culprit, and pledged both to take a more active role in VNS's affairs by sitting on its Board of Directors, as well as to overhaul the consortium's data-gathering procedures to better reflect changes in the electorate, such as accounting for a rise in absentee ballots.

While the 2000 Presidential Election was a large part marked by how its aftermath played out on television, it also was marked by what was not seen: an encroaching privatization of the public interest, and increasingly sophisticated forms of virtual gerrymandering (or dividing an area into voting districts so as to give an advantage to one party). For instance, VNS was symptomatic of the massive downsizing of network news operations beginning in the 1980s. Rather than conduct their own research competitively, ABC,

CBS, CNN, NBC, and the Associated Press formed the consortium after the 1992 election to create a monolithic election-day newsgathering entity. In February 2000, VNS threatened to sue both the online *State* magazine and *National Review Online* after their websites published VNS exit poll data. Given that VNS was the sole source for election news, this oligopolistic behavior seemed somewhat at odds with the commitment to the First Amendment normally found among media organizations. After the November 2000 elections, VNS contracted the Battelle Memorial Institute, a defense and CIA contractor, to develop an entirely new computerized system to tabulate election results. However, the \$8 million overhaul of VNS's data analysis became overloaded and crashed early during coverage of the Congressional elections on November 5, 2002. By January 2003, the major cable operators and networks had decided to disband their consortium, but not before valuable demographic data of that election had been lost forever.

Meanwhile, the story of how Florida Governor Jeb Bush, Secretary of State Katherine Harris, and Florida Director of Elections Clayton Roberts paid \$4 million to DBT, a private company that ended up purging elec-

toral rolls of 22,000 black Democratic voters, has yet to be covered by a single mainstream newsmedia outlet in the United States. The story instead aired in Great Britain as part of the BBC television newsmagazine show *Newsnight* on February 16, 2001.

STEVEN CARR

See also *Political Processes and Television; U.S. Presidency and Television*

Further Reading

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227

U.S. Domestic Comedy

The show 227, initially aired in September 1985, was broadcast for five seasons on NBC before its final episode in July 1990. Based on a play of the same name, this situation comedy was set primarily around an apartment building (number 227) located in a racially mixed neighborhood of Washington, D.C. Featuring an ensemble cast that included such noted African-American television personalities as Marla Gibbs, Hal Williams, Alaina Reed Hall, and Jackee Harry), 227 succeeded in becoming a top-rated television program. Surviving criticisms and early comparisons to other television programs with predominantly African-American principals, 227 proved a successful comedy, humorously portraying the everyday lives of apartment building 227.

The original play, 227, had been written by Christine Houston of Chicago and performed by Marla

Gibbs's own Cross Roads Academy, a local community theater troupe in Los Angeles. After its successful theatrical debut, 227 was soon adapted and produced for television by Lorimar. In its earliest episodes, 227 was criticized as being too much like *The Cosby Show*, another highly successful, predominantly African-American sitcom broadcast on NBC in the 1980s. However, even in its first year, 227 proved successful in its own right, earning top ratings that opening season. While *The Cosby Show* portrayed an image of upper-middle-class success, 227 supporters argued, 227 depicted a more working-class image of the same strong community and family values.

With most episodes taking place within and around the apartment building, from the front steps to the laundry room to the individual apartments, 227 invited the viewer within the most mundane and personal as-

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