

11-02-98

O. Cable

[REDACTED]
Rogue River OR 97537

C-Span
400 N. Capitol Street, NW
Ste 650
Washington, D.C. 20001

We wish to draw your attention to a growing program presentation practice which we find to be irritating, frustrating, and generally unlikeable. It is the practice of putting out programs with deliberately darkened and obscured lighting effects, particularly, but not entirely, in background and night scenes. This practice is even creeping into some commercial advertisements.

We know the problem is not a function of our television receiver because the same phenomena is observable on the receivers of our friends. Furthermore, it should be noted that these darkened presentations, which may either be older films which we know were lighter and brighter presentations when they were originally viewed, or present day productions, are routinely interspersed with bright and colorful commercials.

It is understandable that program sponsors would want their commercials to be bright and colorful for their attention getting properties. It is also understandable that program producers might consider darkened scenes appropriate for mood setting reasons. But those who influence and control this should also realize that when the darkening effect is carried to the point where the imagery is lost, the viewer can no longer follow the action and story line. At this point a good book is in order, and the sponsor has lost a potential customer.

It might also be in order to point out that under overly restrained lighting conditions the facial features and expressions of performers are virtually indistinguishable. This is far more so in the case of those performers with darker skin hues. Such performers might well find darkened imaging an over-extension of the artform, and justifiably also worthy of complaint.

We have discussed this problem with our local TV cable outlet (FALCON Cable TV, 400 S.E. G Street, Grants Pass, OR 97526-3066). The discussion amounted to an exercise in futility, in that while they have conceded that the problem exists, they also reject the thought that they might be considered to have any degree of control over it. It is at their suggestion that we make our complaint directly to you, the networks and channel providers.

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It is now our hope that the networks are the level of programming capable of exercising the control necessary to alleviate the problem described, and that they will do so. If the problem persists it may be necessary to determine whether or not sponsors may be interested in supporting a change in this respect.

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