

“White Rain”

By Albert S. Dandridge III



When I was a child, I could not wait until Thursday night at 8:30 p.m. to watch television. At exactly 8:30 p.m., a commercial would come on and I would start to salivate in anticipation like Pavlov’s dog. It was the White Rain commercial: “Try White Rain shampoo tonight, and tomorrow your hair will be sunshine bright – White Rain, White Rain.”

Next would come the magnificent soundtrack of the start of the “Amos ‘n’ Andy” show. It was very much my favorite television show, and it allowed me to stay up until 9:00 p.m.

“Amos ‘n’ Andy” started on radio in the 1930s with two white actors using black dialect—a minstrel show on the radio. The show migrated to TV in 1951 with—out of necessity—an all-black cast. We got to know Amos (the cameo-appearing straight man), Andy (the amicable dunce who was the victim of some of Kingfish’s shenanigans), Kingfish (the star of the show, the consummate con-artist and serial liar), Sapphire (the fire-breathing dragon lady), and Calhoun (the lawyer with a questionable

azimuth to the North Star).

I was a child, but I still thought it was very funny. It was slapstick of the highest order, with a dose of buffoonery. I never saw my parents wince when looking at the show, although later I found out that some people thought it to be inappropriate. Black folks had enough burdens and did not need another load to carry. Even as a kid, I never thought that it was representative of black lives; it was a comedy.

After a while, however, the NAACP and others who took offense believing that the show created a negative image of black people lobbied to take it off of the air. In 1966, they finally got CBS to cancel the show.

I recently went back and looked at some of the old shows on YouTube. As an adult black male, I now understand the discomfort of the show’s detractors; however, it is still funny.

Now the show has come back for its third incarnation. This iteration is clearly not funny and is offensive. It has come back as a daily reality TV show now playing on Fox News and in Washington, D.C. Kingfish is now played by Donald Trump. Andy is now played by Mike Pence. Amos is now played by Mitt Romney. Sapphire is now played by Kellyanne Conway. Calhoun is now played by Bill Barr. Now, everyone winces.

No White Rain. ■

Albert S. Dandridge III (adandridge@schnader.com), a partner at Schnader Harrison Segal & Lewis, chair of the firm’s Securities Practice Group and its Chief Diversity Officer, is a member of the Editorial Board of The Philadelphia Lawyer.



Lawyer Referral and Information Service

(215) 238-6333

PhiladelphiaBarLawyers.com

TRUST US TO HELP

LRIS Has Been Helping the Community Since 1948

- LRIS refers potential clients to approximately 175 attorneys.
- LRIS attorneys are in good standing, have professional liability insurance and must meet certain experience requirements.
- LRIS attorneys practice in more than 150 areas of law.
- In 2017, LRIS received 25,425 inquiries and made 11,208 referrals.

If You Have Someone You Cannot Help... Refer Them to Us!

Questions?

For questions, contact Director of Public and Legal Services Charlie Klitsch at (215) 238-6326 or cklitsch@philabar.org.

Lawyer Referral and Information Service
of the Philadelphia Bar Association
1101 Market St., 11th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107

