

Presentation: 60 Minutes

60 Minutes, first aired in 1968, has come a long way in terms of news reporting. To be quite honest, this is the first episode of the show that I've ever seen. When it comes to news in general, I haven't had the patience to sit down and listen to a 20-minute rendition of an investigation story. But of course I lucked out and chose an episode with content that I perceived as mildly interesting.

60 Minutes divided its time between three stories, which means they were able to get fairly in-depth into their stories as opposed to regular news programs. In a way, this is something I can be thankful for simply because the fast-paced nature of regular news programs tends to give me something of a headache. Plus I get the overall feeling that the newscasters are hiding something or not telling all the facts.

Not so with *60 Minutes*. Okay, well, they might. But I wouldn't really know since I've seen a whopping single episode out of the more than 40 seasons the show has been running. So I won't make any claims at being an expert on what they are or aren't telling us, as much of an expert as I may be at being bamboozled by the media.

In the episode of *60 Minutes* that I graced my attention with, I was thankfully not given an investigative report by Anderson Cooper because, to put it mildly, I hate him. But I digress. This episode was from September 25, wherein the reporters:

- Took a tour conducted by Police Commissioner Ray Kelly of one of the most sophisticated terror defense forces
- Investigated the murder of a neo-Nazi leader by his sociopath 10-year-old son

- Take a look at Trey Parker and Matt Stone's success with *South Park* and now the Broadway musical, *The Book of Mormon*

Each story was presented in an almost subtly different way. I would daresay that this was done to create greater appeal to viewers. The tour of the terror defense forces in New York City gave a somewhat favorable look at the efforts that have been made to prevent terrorism. The murder of the neo-Nazi leader took the traditional approach of an investigative report. Then the report on Trey Parker and Matt Stone took a historical or chronological look at their rise to success.

In the first third of *60 Minutes*, the report was taken on an in-depth tour of the terror defenses for New York City. One of the things that stood out to me most was the fact that they employed over 50,000 workers, 35,000 of which were police officers. The police task force for this one city was more than three times the size of my home city. It certainly put into perspective the enormity of the task they were faced with. At the same time, protecting a city of more than eight million people with only 35,000 on-foot police officers seems inadequate.

This report also went into the extensive systems in place that helped with identifying potential threats. They boasted a 2,000 security camera system in the Manhattan region that would soon be 3,000 cameras, a system so comprehensive that no blind spots could be found on any street. They then discussed a \$150M intelligence system in place that was able to monitor the feeds of all the cameras to identify potential threats. It was able to identify bags left unattended and how long they were unattended for, giving alerts when a bag had been by itself for over a certain amount of time. Pretty impressive.

My overall indication of this part of *60 Minutes* was that they were simply trying to inform us of the monumental task that goes into protecting such a large city. There was no real agenda other than to tell us that NYC is protected. Well, this could also be used as something to ward off terrorists by saying "we know everything." Because it certainly gave off the impression that the defense system in place was

quite thorough. Of course they wouldn't focus on any of the flaws inherent in a system worked by thousands of individuals.

In the second third of *60 Minutes*, we got to see a darker side to life with the murder of a neo-Nazi leader by his 10-year-old son. The story pulled some at the heart strings despite how outrageous the story. Rather than just going into the story of the murder, they gave some background on the individual who was murdered and his lifestyle. They made it seem like his decision to become a neo-Nazi was based more on the state of the economy than from any personal belief. But it would seem that his decision was somewhat vindicated by his location. He was a construction worker in California, but the influx of immigrant workers essentially put him out of work. Three years unemployed and embittered by the state of the economy by what he deemed an invasion of a foreign workforce, he became one of the more prominent neo-Nazi leaders because of his personable nature and dedication to the cause.

The reporter of this story apparently wanted to emphasize the ridiculous nature of their cause when she questioned another neo-Nazi leader about their cause. The man of course reiterated their ridiculous desire that the U.S. be a country of white people and that all non-whites remove themselves peacefully or else the neo-Nazis would by force. Based on this interview alone, it seemed like the beliefs of this political group were essentially brushed off as unrealistic and absurd, but at the same time, the cause for what happened.

The one construction worker, now neo-Nazi leader held many of his meetings in his home where his family was able to listen in and take in the "hate speeches." The reporter was obviously of the mindset that the father exposing his child to his neo-Nazi views was something of a catalyst for what became sociopathic tendencies. While it was attributed that the father beat his son occasionally, the boy was also accredited with having been thrown out of multiple schools for multiple reports of violence. On one occasion, he strangled a teacher with a telephone cord. His family knew that the boy

had these violent tendencies regardless of the influences of the neo-Nazi beliefs his father held. They knew he was bound to do something of this magnitude eventually. So this came as no surprise.

I can't say that this is a story in which the reporter could have maintained an impartial stance on simply because of the volatile nature of the neo-Nazi beliefs. There is a reason they are so few and their view is so controversial. The basic point that was reiterated here was that the hatred spawned from the neo-Nazi movement was not something to raise a family in.

The third report on *60 Minutes* seemed more like a short biography about Trey Parker and Matt Stone. It began by looking briefly into their latest production *The Book of Mormon* which has become an amazing Broadway hit. I'll admit, even though I'm a Mormon, I would love to see it. However, I think that the reporter of this story dodged something of a bullet or rather wanted to keep the focus away from religion in general and instead focused on the inspiration of its creators.

The focus of this report was on how the Parker and Stone first got into show business with their viral success of the controversial TV show, *South Park*. It described their personalities and how well they work together, essentially creating a partnership that would transcend all difficulties that might arise. The two voiced many of the characters to the show, provided the main inspiration and storyboarding for each episode... they practically do the whole show on their own. But nowadays they thankfully have other people who can do the animation side.

I thought it interesting that in the show's focus on *South Park* creators Stone and Parker, it allowed them opportunities to let their goofy sides show. They stated outright that they weren't making their shows to be funny for the public. They made each episode of *South Park* so it would be funny to themselves, making it seem like the rest of us were just a secondary concern. But I don't think it was meant as an insult, merely that they don't over analyze the world and the issues going on in it like *The Simpsons* obviously does. That's why *The Simpsons* isn't as funny as it once was. *South Park* continues to be popular because Stone and Parker are just looking to create a show that is funny to themselves.

Thus where *The Book of Mormon* comes in. In reality, it felt like this part of the story was more of an aside note than the actual story. Stone and Parker expressed frank surprise over the popularity of the musical, though it was exactly the intended result that they were hoping for. They were just looking for another line to cross into the outrageous, which apparently they've done. Mormons are ridiculed for a lot, which this musical may only continue to encourage. Okay, every religion gets ridiculed for a lot of things. So I won't pretend Mormons are exclusively targeted.

Overall, as this was my first experience watching *60 Minutes*, I thought it was insightful and interesting. I found that watching it online was quite preferable to the TV simply because I really hate commercial breaks. I had better things to do with the other 20 minutes of my hour rather than watch commercials about the Chevy Volt or Hulk Hogan's midget wrestling show. Like writing this paper.

This show has uniquely set itself apart from other news shows by their focus on each individual story. Rather than trying to glaze over a handful of interesting topics, they give each story the attention it deserves. We live in a world where we're literally barraged with messages, and news reports tend to follow the same format. Reporters will go through multiple stories each minute, forcing us to look online for the full story on something they just mentioned as an afterthought.

60 Minutes attempts to answer the questions we may have about a particular story. They investigate a story before presenting it rather than coming up with a 30-second elevator pitch to get us interested and then change the subject. They follow a more long-form news story approach to give us more of the background on an issue. I think this is a good thing since the majority of us suffer from insufficient information on a topic before we make our stance. People decide after a 30-second news story not to buy anything from Japan because it might be radioactive. But is there any actual credence to that? Maybe. *60 Minutes* attempts to do what it can to solve the ignorance of the modern viewer by delving further into an issue to give a full investigation rather than a cursory look over a potential problem.