

LYNDA ARMSTRONG, TORONTO

“What we get in the Canadian media is a fantasy. Worse than that it’s an outright lie—especially in advertising.

“One of the ironic aspects about the discrimination that I have faced as a black person, and as a professional performer who happens to be black, is that I am a fifth generation Canadian. My grand-father was a respected member of the Masonic Lodge—the white Masonic Lodge—in Nova Scotia at the turn of the century. Yet his granddaughter in 1984 Toronto has to justify the colour of her skin, and her very worth as a human being.

“The WHITE ONLY mentality of the Canadian establishment is weird when you consider that this is one of the most racially diverse societies on earth.”

“The WHITE ONLY mentality of the Canadian establishment is weird when you consider that this is one of the most racially diverse societies on earth. Canada is a mosaic. It’s a mixed bag, a wonderfully mixed up collection of different colours, different sounds, and different habits from everywhere on the planet. That’s the reality.

“But what we get in the Canadian media is a fantasy. Worse than that, it’s an outright lie—especially in advertising. The women and men in the commercials are all WASPs. It’s so stereotyped and artificial that you don’t even see a white person *with red hair*—only blondes and brunettes. The whole advertising industry, both clients and agencies, live in a sterile, out-of-touch fantasy world that has very little connection with the human reality of the Canadian public. Viewers here get a bigger dose of reality for watching American commercials than they do from the daily diet of lily-white, totally predictable commercials from Canadian advertisers.

“Advertising simply reflects what is true about the entire Canadian attitude to mass communication—namely, WHITE SELLS. The president of Labatt’s actually said this, these very words, when he was asked why there were no non-whites in his country’s commercials.

“The established cultural community in Canada, both English and French, have exactly this same mindset—WHITE SELLS. The politicians and the gurus of the cultural world in this country keep moaning and wringing their hands about the lack of a “strong Canadian identity”, and how the big, bad United States is overwhelming us with its commercial culture. If

