

Presentation Title: “Is There a Cultural Divide in America?”

Abstract:

When racially charged riots blazed South Central, Los Angeles two decades ago, the community became a national symbol of rage in a poor black neighborhood. Within the past few years, media coverage of the King beatings, the Trayvon Martin case and recent protests regarding Ferguson, MO (Michael Brown, Jr.), have raised concerns over the rioting in various parts of the U.S. Additionally, the press has reported several incidents of violence directed toward the residents throughout St. Louis, Missouri. In situations as these, local television stations must tread the ethical line between serving their community’s interests and serving those of their network. In a hypothetical case study, CBS’ St. Louis affiliate KMOV is presented with this ethical dilemma: Whether to air a two-hour long *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* special that capitalizes on the public's interest in the Ferguson situation, racial politics, and the cultural divide in America. The episode will bring the struggling station \$68,000 in revenue; however, local St. Louis press critics have solidly denounced the episode for its violence and its inappropriate timing, especially, considering the Ferguson case. This presentation will examine the case study, provide a possible solutions for KMOV, and discuss the role the media plays in contentious issues.

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