

does not go to redress harm have tended to be the places where women, children, people of color, and poor people live" (Matsuda 1989, 2322). She argues that a content-based restriction of racist speech is more protective of civil liberties than other tests that have been traditionally applied. Could such an argument be applied to entertainment programming?

4. In the current American media landscape, talk radio is supposedly the stronghold of the right while the majority of major daily newspapers are supposedly controlled by the left. Does the evidence validate this widely held assumption? Is democracy well-served by this arrangement of entire media systems leaning to one side of the political spectrum?

Macro Issues

1. Are entertainers relieved of ethical responsibilities if they are "just giving the audience what they want"? Do Van Lansing's high ratings validate his behavior, since many people are obviously in agreement with him?
2. How does Van Lansing's narrow view of the world differ from a television situation comedy that stereotypes blondes as dumb, blue-collar workers as bigoted, etc.?
3. Van Lansing says that it's great that a guy like him can have a radio show. Is tolerance one of the measures of a democracy? If so, are there limits to tolerance, and who draws those lines?
4. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas has said, "If we are to have freedom of mind in America, we must produce a generation of men and women who will make tolerance for all ideas a symbol of virtue." How should democratic societies cope with unpopular points of view, particularly as expressed through the mass media?

CASE 10-F

SEARCHING FOR SUGAR MAN: REDISCOVERED ART

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What makes a hit record has never been reduced to a formula. During the decades of the 1960s and early 1970s, hundreds of talented artists

were never heard beyond a small group of fans because their records didn't sell. That was the case with a young Detroit musician, Sixto Rodriguez, who produced one album—*Cold Fact*—in 1970 and a second in 1971. With a voice reminiscent of James Taylor and lyrics with the edge and poetry of Bob Dylan, Rodriguez's career never made it out of Detroit. Years later, his Motown-based producer, then living in California, told Danish documentary filmmaker Malik Benbdielloul that Rodriguez had sold exactly six records in the States.

Which was true—sort of. What his producer may have known—but Rodriguez unquestionably did not—was that the *Cold Fact* album and its title song had become the anthem of young people half a world away. In South Africa, in the early 1970s, Rodriguez was better known than Elvis, sold more records than the Rolling Stones, and had become the voice of a generation that wanted to challenge the apartheid political system in that country. His two records were considered so inflammatory that government censors deliberately scratched vinyl copies housed at radio stations so they could not be broadcast over the air. In the days before the internet, Rodriguez was an underground pied piper—everyone knew his songs just as everyone in a certain generation in the United States knew that “the answer was blowin’ in the wind.”

His South African fans also knew something else: Rodriguez was dead. No one was quite sure how he died, but there were conflicting newspaper reports that he had committed suicide—everything from setting himself alight on stage to protest apartheid to shooting himself. In an era of untimely rock musician deaths—Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison—it seemed only too reasonable. The mystery and the assumption of Rodriguez's demise persisted in South Africa for more than two decades. However, as the country changed, his largely Africanse fans did not forget, including two now-middle-aged fans-turned-music journalists who set out on an unlikely quest to find out how Rodriguez actually had died.

Solving that mystery became the focus of the documentary film *Searching for Sugar Man* that Benbdielloul reported, shot, and produced in the early 21st century. The film chronicles the efforts of the South Africans, one of whom is nicknamed Sugarman, to track down Rodriguez, with the most profoundly startling result.

In response to an internet posting about the circumstances of the musician's death, Rodriguez's adult daughter emailed back that her father is alive, he's living as he has for decades in Detroit supporting himself through heavy construction work, and he has literally no idea about his impact on the nation and the people of South Africa. When the South Africans find and then telephone Rodriguez, he hangs up the phone, thinking that the call is a prank. But, thanks to this initial

connection, in the late 1990s, Rodriguez ultimately travels to South Africa where his concert performances are sold out and he plays to audiences in the thousands who can sing every word of every song. Benbdielloul reports it all, including lengthy interviews with Rodriguez, his daughter, his South African fans, and a sound track shot through with music that still seems timely even in the next century.

But, to report this different sort of magical mystery (Rodriguez had stopped playing professionally many years before), Benbdielloul makes what he admits are some uneasy compromises (personal communication 2012). In order to track down information about Rodriguez himself, Benbdielloul needs to interview his former producer—who had received some royalty checks for South African sales. The film can't go forward without his cooperation, so Benbdielloul makes the decision not to confront the producer about potential financial chicanery in order to learn more about Rodriguez's early recording and artistic career. Benbdielloul, himself, is working on a shoestring budget—while he's shooting the film, he spends some nights on Rodriguez's couch to defray expenses. And, Rodriguez himself is vague about some things. The finished documentary, for example, never mentions a marriage or a lover—although he has three children who appear in the film—nor does it delve deeply into why a person with such enormous talent—having learned he is a phenomenon—fails literally and artistically to capitalize on it during the late 1900s and early 2000s.

The documentary debuted formally in the United States in July 2012. Rodriguez and Benbdielloul were both interviewed in the *New York Times* and NPR, where audiences learn that Rodriguez had been politically active in Detroit, running unsuccessfully for mayor more than once. Rodriguez's US artistic career also begins to take off; he plays gigs such as South by Southwest and his music is covered at the Newport Jazz Festival.

Micro Issues

1. In crafting the narrative, Benbdielloul behaves more like a feature writer than he does an investigative journalist, even though it is clear that there are things worthy of investigation about Rodriguez's royalty payments. Analyze this choice, from the point of role. Is this a case of leaving out important facts to tell a better story?
2. Should the filmmaker have literally lived with his subject to produce this film? Justify your answer using ethical theory. How would you respond if a journalist had done the same thing with an important source?
3. Is the filmmaker using Rodriguez as a means to his ends?

Midrange Issues

1. How hard should the filmmaker have “pushed” to get information about the potentially less seemly parts of Rodriguez’s life?
2. Rodriguez says on camera that he is a shy person. Indeed, in his early Detroit career, he often played at a bar called the Sewer with his back to the audience. Does a film such as *Searching for Sugar Man* invade his obviously valued privacy?

Macro Issues

1. Based on the above facts and what you can find on the internet, analyze how Rodriguez’s lack of success in the United States might be explained by the concept of popular culture.
2. In today’s environment, where musicians often make it on the web before making it on the road, do you think Rodriguez and his music would find a US audience? Does it matter?
3. Is the documentary film responsible for changing Rodriguez’s life? Should the director have been concerned about this potential as he made the film?