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Bill Moyers: a thoughtful voice amid the din

Thomas C. Fox | Dec. 15, 2009 NCR Today

This commentary [1] in the Los Angeles Times by author and media commentator Neal Gabler, is worth recognition and worth a few minutes of your time.

It begins with these words about Bill Moyers, whose voice -- and moral authority -- among us we have valued for decades:

It is a testament to how much Bill Moyers matters that this quiet, humble man can still stir passions. When he announced late last month he would be leaving his award-winning weekly PBS series, "Bill Moyers Journal," in April, some of us felt as if we were losing a sacred American institution, a repository of the nation's conscience, while others cheered. Right-wing bloviator Bill O'Reilly went so far as to boast that he had forced Moyers from the air -- a claim that was not only patently false but also a misconception of who Moyers is and what he does. Astonishing as it may be to anyone who has watched Moyers, his right-wing critics seem to see him as just another noisy shill among the army of blowhards, ideologues, demagogues and partisans on the airwaves. They couldn't be more wrong.

The reason so many of us are already mourning Moyers' departure is that he is so unlike O'Reilly and that ilk. Though Moyers has certainly addressed the major issues of his times and taken fierce stands on them -- against military adventurism, against violence, against intolerance and hatred, for environmental sensitivity, for real healthcare reform and grass-roots democracy -- and though his recent programs have provided the deepest and most invigorating discussions of these issues on television, most of his work has had little to do directly with politics or policy and nothing at all to do with opinion-mongering. He is far less interested in advancing a particular position than in inspiring moral growth in the hope of creating a more just and beneficent society. In short, far from being another cudgel-wielding pundit, Moyers may be television's only moralist.

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[1] http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/news/la-ca-bill-moyers13-2009dec13,0,4871625.story