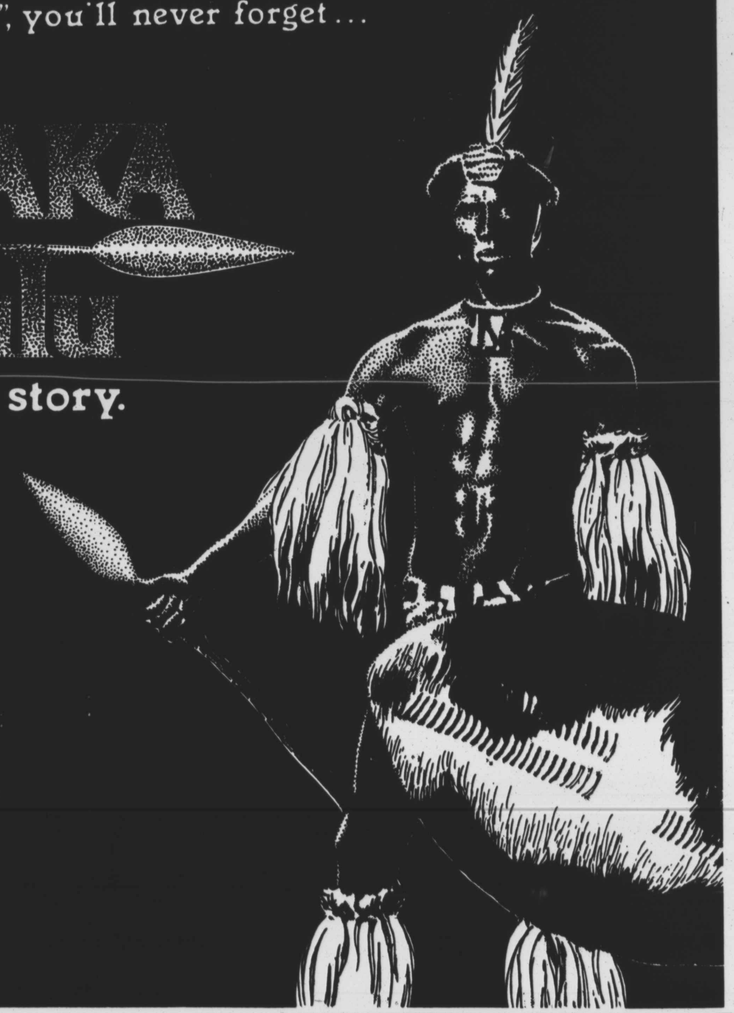
From the windswept plains of Africa
comes the epic mini-series that cannot be compared to anything ever seen before on television.

$24 million and 4 years in the making.

If you loved "Roots", you'll never forget...

SHAKA Zulu

A true story.



MONDAY-FRIDAY
FEB. 23 - 27
8PM

WBFF-TV
BALTIMORE

Deborah Quinerly

About TV

The month of February, Black History Month, has become very special for black people all over this country. Black television viewers, particularly, have begun to see a wealth of television programming geared especially to entertain, educate and enlighten them during this month.

Sometimes these programs are right on the mark. But, sometimes, they leave much to be desired. I am sorry to say this is one of those weeks.

For starters, WJZ is presenting "Great Black Women: Achievers Against the Odds" on Saturday, February 21st at 7:00 P.M. This one hour special focuses on the lives and achievements of black women, from all aspects of society. Just a few of the black women mentioned and interviewed are Tina Turner, Shirley Chisholm, Natalie Cole, the Pointer Sisters and Barbara Jordan.

Notice that I say "just a few" because within the entire hour, there were so many women mentioned, I lost track of the count. In other words, there were so many black women being recognized for their achievements, each woman was discussed for only about two to three minutes.

Even when some, such as Phylicia Rashad, Debbie Allen and Maya Angelou were interviewed by Tanya Hart, the show's host and narrator, the interviews add only about two minutes to that particular woman's segment.

Most of the time, only a picture of a black woman is flashed on the screen with her name and a two to three word caption, describing her particular achievement.

Don't get me wrong. It was pleasant to see so many black women being noted for their individual achievements. It even gave me the opportunity to see a brief interview of Naomi Sims, the former fashion model and high school classmate of mine.

But, what I feel would have been more effective would have been to take, maybe, three of the women and give a more thorough discussion of their personal achievements. The show's title tells us that these women had to achieve their present status by going against great odds. But what odds, specifically? A few times, no odds or struggles were even mentioned.

Many of the women interviewed are famous and have names which are easily recognized. But what I found more interesting, and a bit more personal, was an interview with a lady named June Johnson — not a household name.

But this black woman briefly begins an interview in which she talks about a personal experience she had when she was fourteen years old and living in the South during the 60's.

At that time, blacks were trying to get voting rights and Ms. Johnson was in the company of some other blacks who had registered to vote, an act despised and fought by some whites. She and her friends were attacked, beaten and jailed.

During the interview, Ms. Johnson breaks down and cries because this traumatic experience still haunts her.

I am not minimizing the achievements of the women mentioned, and I wish all of them continued success. But when it comes to seeing a discussion on how the Pointer Sisters' "Breakout" album went triple platinum and how a fourteen-year-old girl almost gave her life for a principle that some of us have come to take for granted, Ms. Johnson, and others like her, will get my vote every time.

"Great Black Women: Achievers Against the Odds" has "achieved" only one thing. It is a waste of time.

Next, we have what I believe is the biggest insult and slap in the face television has ever presented. In "honor" of Black History Month, Channel 45 is presenting "Shaka Zulu," a true-life, ten-hour, epic mini-series about a South African warrior-king. This travesty will be shown Monday, February 23rd through Friday, the 27th at 8:00 P.M. in two-hour increments.

As Robert L. Simmons, general manager of WBFF says, "We are proud to present this long-awaited epic. In the tradition of "Roots," "Shaka Zulu" offers an important historical perspective into the black experience."

What is ironical about this statement is that the words "proud" and "Roots" are used together. "Roots" was proud television. "Roots" showed the struggles of one man, whose hopes, dreams and determination yielded a sense of pride in blacks all over the country.

What did "Shaka Zulu" yield? It certainly wasn't pride! By the end of the second hour, I was ready to print up a protest sign, gather up my friends and picket Channel 45's station.

"Shaka Zulu" is the name used by an African warrior who rounds up thousands of warriors, massacres other tribes and, generally, wages havoc throughout South Africa during the early 1800's.

It is all right with the white colonists there because "Shaka," played by Henry Cele, an international soccer star, is killing other blacks. But, when it becomes evident that he is battling towards the white settlers' territory, they try every means necessary to stop him.

The colonists decide upon an adventuresome soldier, named "Lt. Francis Farewell." He is given a ship and a highly skilled crew and sent off to conquer "Shaka."

After a shipwreck, "Farewell" ends up with a few of his crew and is met by a delegation of "Shaka's" warriors. When "Shaka" is finally seen, we are introduced to a man who speaks as if he had attended Harvard or Yale.

The only problem is that before he is seen, the viewer is led to believe that "Shaka" is a savage and quite inhuman. Do inhuman savages always speak so intelligently, eloquently and philosophically? Do inhuman savages, who have never seen whites before, adopt them as "brother in the struggle?" On this program, they do.

By the end of the program, "Shaka" is killed by his own warriors. But not before he assaults his mother and kills his own son, father and tribesmen. This goes against everything blacks have stood for. We are a family-oriented people, and rarely wage war on our own families.

The viewer also hears one of the white rulers state that "Shaka"and his tribe had to be done away with quickly because

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Specials scheduled to air this week miss the mark

The Talk of the Town!

Donahue 10:00am

Oprah 9:00am

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