



### **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Walter Cronkite Awards Ceremony Charlayne Hunter-Gault's Acceptance Speech**

Greetings everyone. Although I am not there in person, due to some unforeseen circumstances, I am so there in spirit...as I am sure Walter Cronkite is...a spirit that has brought all of you together—friends of Walter's, many of whom are also friends of mine...that's the way it is ---on the Vineyard...a community of people who are drawn to each other because of the values (as well as the good times) they share.

And that is what is so wonderful about getting the Walter Cronkite Award...as much of a surprise as it was...I am so delighted to have my name associated with a man who was such an integral part of this beloved community, and also one of the giants on whose shoulders I and a whole generation of journalists stand. Walter Cronkite's journalism was always infused with the kind of moral authority and passion that lit our path...and which, I have tried to embrace during my almost 50 years as a journalist. For example, Walter travelled to South Africa almost 9 years before I did, when he went during the viciously oppressive era of apartheid to speak on behalf of a black photojournalist who had been nominated to receive the country's most prestigious journalism award. Walter didn't mince words when he spoke truth to power: speaking of the need for a free press ... principally to educate the public...and went on to put South Africa's refusal to grant a visa to a CBS correspondent on a par with the Soviet Union's similar behavior. It was a bold, brave statement, infused with moral authority that in the end drew the wrath of the regime and lost Walter his requested interview with the prime minister. But it lit a flame that was still burning when I got to even more brutal apartheid South Africa in 1985, guided by that spirit of moral authority as I reported on "apartheid's people," and their quest for justice and equality.

Walter Cronkite's example showed generations to follow that the standard was not objectivity that so many journalism schools drill into their students, but fairness and balance, infused with passion, the standard I have embraced reporting from all over the world--And while I am thrilled, honored and humbled to be receiving the Walter Cronkite award here on Martha's Vineyard, I wish this wonderful organization-- the Stone Soup Leadership Institute -- could replicate it all over the country—not honoring me, but the diminishing few journalists who are trying to do their job of reporting news that can be used by the citizens of this country to make wise decisions about the things that affect their lives and those of their neighbors—near and beyond our borders ,in this ever increasingly interconnected world. For they need all the help and support they can get...as the news hold is reduced by economic imperatives and as the profession tries to re-define itself in an era of uncertainty about its role. The public is getting what far too many news outlets think it wants that will keep it tuned in, experimenting with pontificating, paternalistic anchors often with not so hidden political agendas or otherwise self promoting. Arriving back in this country from South Africa during this election year, I could not believe the cacophony of shrillness on news programs emanating from my television set. Often I can't make heads of tails of it. And I am led to wonder what Walter Cronkite, the tough but genial anchor would make of it all.

But, in order to be true to my calling, I will close with a couple of questions to you admirers of Walter Cronkite. How do you feel about the quality of news you're getting? And if you do not believe you are getting news you can use to make informed decisions, what are you going to do about it? This Award in Walter Cronkite's name will spur me to keep on keeping on—trying to the best of my ability—to be a witness on behalf of a public that needs all of us to be the best that we can be in what I still consider to be one of the noblest professions of all.

And finally, let me congratulate Shavanae Anderson for her award and marvelous video...*Passing the Torch* and encourage her to keep on keepin' on, informing and inspiring her generation so that they become the giants of their generation and keepers of the flame of moral authority. I thank you.

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