

## **Remembering a Friend: Ed Bradley Was a Gift to Journalism**

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This week we lost one of the great journalists of our time. A brilliant man with a velvet voice and a kind heart, Ed Bradley was one of my mentors when I was a young producer at CBS News. Bradley was a voice for human rights, for ethics in journalism, and for using media for positive social change.

In his full but too-short life, Bradley was a schoolteacher, radio DJ, war correspondent wounded in Cambodia, CBS's first African- American White House correspondent, and a gourmet chef who loved music, skiing, and life. Most of all, he loved a good story.

I recall when Bradley and I went on the road with B.B. King in Florida, and one of the concert stops was a prison where King's daughter, Patty, was incarcerated for drug trafficking. King told Bradley, "I have 15 children . . . This is the first time I ever did a concert with a family member in trouble." In front of Patty, Bradley asked, "What kind of father do you think you were?" King shook his head and answered, "Not the best. Not the best. I love my family. I love my children. I wish I could have been a better father." Bradley stroked his close-cropped beard and listened intently for more.

King later told me that he could not have shared that story with any other reporter, but he trusted Bradley and knew he understood the pain of the blues. "King of the Road" aired in 1993 on CBS "Street Stories," a news magazine that Bradley helped to create. "Street Stories" was pure Bradley. Ahead of its time, the program was hip, raw, and real -- a more edgy alternative to the staid "60 Minutes" where Bradley continued to be a reporter. B.B. King's story won one of the 19 Emmy Awards that sits on a cluttered bookshelf in Bradley's office at CBS in New York.

Traveling with Bradley was the hard-news equivalent of traveling with a rock star. I remember one time I went to meet him at an airport gate. He was swamped by a group of women ranging in age from 18-80 -- Bradley groupies desperate for a chat, a snapshot, or just a handshake. Flashing his signature grin, eyes twinkling, Bradley said he wished he had more time but he was there on business, and made a quick but courteous exit. As we headed to the car, he leaned over to whisper, "What they don't know is, I'm really very shy."

Perhaps it was that singular blend of shyness and showmanship that made Bradley one of the best in the business, a man of extraordinary compassion, depth, and dignity. Bradley skillfully wielded a tool most reporters rarely employ -- silence. He would ask a question

and then sit and wait for an answer, and after the answer he continued to wait, compelling people to dig deeper, to reach, and to be honest.

Bradley inspired me to teach young people to use media for positive social change. When I taught a documentary course at Tufts University, I showed clips of Bradley's work to teach aspiring journalists how to ask probing questions and to listen carefully. We analyzed Bradley's stories on the effects of nuclear testing, Chinese forced-labor camps, and the controversy between the parents of a deaf child and a deaf association.

Viewers know Bradley's hard-hitting journalism. I saw his softer side. When the editor of the B.B. King story, my friend Lisa Orlando, was battling cancer, Bradley raced out of a busy newsroom to come to a birthday party in her honor. He sat in the middle of a group of 12 women who were in tears, and cried along with us. When Lisa saw Bradley recently, he remarked, "We are both survivors." That was optimistic Ed. Even then leukemia was consuming him.

Ed Bradley was a gift to the profession of journalism, to my young students, to my dear friend Lisa, and to me. I hope that the next generation of reporters will learn to listen as he did.

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