Julia Encyclopedia Article

Julia

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Debuting on NBC in September, 1968 *Julia* was the first network television series to star an African American in the leading role since *Amos 'n' Andy* and *Beulah* left the air in 1953. The gentle situation comedy featured Diahann Carroll as Julia Baker, a widowed black nurse with a six year-old son, Corey, living a thoroughly integrated lifestyle in a Los Angeles apartment building. Surrounded by whites, the Bakers encountered only the most innocuous instances of prejudice. The series reached the airwaves during a particularly incendiary moment in American race relations—the aftermath of Martin Luther King's assassination; a "long hot summer" of riots and burning in inner city ghettos, and rising Black Power militancy. Inevitably, the series, which ignored all these issues, stirred controversy. Julia was dismissed by some as a "white Negro" and the series was considered irrelevant, if not dangerous, especially because it featured no African American male characters of authority or narrative importance. On the other hand, the series was praised for opening doors to subsequent African American sitcoms and for demonstrating that American audiences, black and white, could enjoy non-stereo-typed black characters on prime-time. After a successful three year run, *Julia* left the air in 1971.

Further Reading:

Bodroghkozy, Aniko. "'Is This What You Mean By Color TV?': Race, Gender, and Contested Meanings in *Julia."* In *Private Screenings: Television and the Female Consumer,* edited by Lynn Spigel and Denise Mann. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1992, 143-67.