

When Do Christian-Bashers Begin 'Sensitivity Training'?

Chris Culliver, the San Francisco 49ers player who bad-mouthed gays last week, will soon begin LGBT sensitivity training. When do the public figures who bad-mouth conservative Christians begin their sensitivity training?

Back in 2007, basketball player Tim Hardaway received an avalanche of criticism when he said during a radio interview, "I hate gay people. I don't like to be around gay people. I'm homophobic. I don't like it. It shouldn't be in the world for that or in the United States for it. So yeah, I don't like it." He too went to sensitivity training and has since emerged as a gay rights spokesman.

Also in 2007 (as I documented in *A Queer Thing Happened to America*), Isaiah Washington, star of ABC's *Grey's Anatomy*, referred to (then-closeted) gay co-star T. R. Knight with the "f-got" word during a heated, on-set incident. He then compounded his transgression in a backstage interview with reporters at the Golden Globes event on Jan. 15, 2007: "No, I did not call T.R a f-got. Never happened, never happened."

ABC was quick to express its outrage: "We are greatly dismayed that Mr. Washington chose to use such inappropriate language at the Golden Globes, language that he himself deemed 'unfortunate' in his previous public apology," the network said in a statement. "His actions are unacceptable and are being addressed."

Neil Giuliano, then president of GLAAD (the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, better described as Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Disagreement) referred to the situation as "deeply troubling" and stated that Washington's repeated use of the word was "inexcusable," asking for a meeting to discuss

“the destructive impact of these kinds of anti-gay slurs.”

Then, on Jan. 18, 2007, Washington came clean, expressing how deep his problems really were: “I apologize to T.R., my colleagues, the fans of the show and especially the lesbian and gay community for using a word that is unacceptable in any context or circumstance. . . . I can neither defend nor explain my behavior. I can also no longer deny to myself that there are issues I obviously need to examine within my own soul, and I’ve asked for help.”

He too went for professional counseling and rehabilitation, but despite his apology and his efforts to make amends with the LGBT community, ABC fired him. Contrition and sensitivity training were not enough for the great transgression of simply uttering the “f—” word.

Contrast this with the reaction to actor Mark Ruffalo’s 2010 comments regarding conservative Christians and others who were opposed to redefining marriage. He said, “It’s the last dying, kicking, screaming, caged animal response to a world that is changing, a world that’s leaving a lot of those old, bigoted, un-accepting views behind. It’s over. Those against it are very tricky and they’re using really dark ways to promote their ideas.”

Was he sent off to sensitivity training? Would you like to venture a guess?

How about Roseanne Barr? Did she go to sensitivity training after expressing her ire towards Chick-Fil-A customers (especially Christian customers) in some notorious messages on Twitter last year? She tweeted, “Anyone who eats S*** Fil-A deserves to get the cancer that is sure to come from eating antibiotic filled tortured chickens 4Christ,” adding, “off to grab a s*** fil-A sandwich on my way to worshipping Christ, supporting Aipac and war in Iran.”

Of course, she did receive criticism for being insensitive to

cancer victims, tweeting in response, "Rereading my tweet I realize that I used the wrong word—I shouldn't have used the word deserves. . . . I meant to warn ppl not 2 eat processed food." But her vile attacks on conservative Christians continued unabated and without apology. Of course!

How about Bill Maher, a veritable treasure trove of anti-Christian comments? He actually made an entire movie called "Religulous" that was devoted to mocking religious faith, but somehow, I missed the news about his subsequent apologies and his time spent in sensitivity training.

And what about the new painting by West Hollywood artist Bronwyn Lundberg? It's entitled "The Lesbian Last Supper" and features Ellen Degeneres as Jesus. (I kid you not.) Lundberg explained, "Religious art will inevitably strike strong responses in some people but those are issues I can't worry about because I really can't identify with them."

In other words, the less you can relate to the sacred things of the Christian faith, the more you are welcome to mock them.

Can you imagine what the reaction would have been had Lundberg been a Christian artist (or even secular artist) who produced a portrait mocking gays, only to reply to her critics, "I can't worry about their negative reaction because I really can't identify with gays"?

Now, the truth be told, I think it's a great idea for people who do not approve of homosexual practice to sit with LGBT leaders and young people and hear about their lives and their struggles. Absolutely. If we differ, let's do so without caricature and with grace and sensitivity. And, to be perfectly candid, I hardly expect Christian-bashing to go away any time soon (see John 15:18-20).

But I raise these issues because, once again, the glaring, ridiculous double standard needs to be exposed, and—in light of the extreme reaction to any criticism of homosexuality

today—one can only wonder what's coming tomorrow.

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