

OPINION

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Speaking Out on Imus' Hate Speech

Scourge of the Airwaves

The announcement by CBS and MSNBC that they will no longer carry Don Imus' show is a welcome first step in removing this scourge from the airwaves.

Our protests against other enablers - the show's sponsors and guests -- will continue.

The Imus controversy has had the unexpected but refreshing effect of reigniting an American conversation about race and the coarsening of our society.



Julian Bond
NAACP Board Chairman

We want to extend the conversation to include the prevalence of bigotry, misogyny and homophobia which cheapens our society, denigrates our population, and marginalizes our people. Whether it comes from so-called 'shock jocks', rappers or the non-famous, it has to end, and the NAACP stands ready to assist in the dialogue and the solutions.

Cruel Assault on Dignity

Don Imus' use of the public airwaves to denigrate and ridicule the young, talented and hard working African American women of the Rutgers University team was a cruel assault on the dignity of all African Americans and women.

The Links, Inc. believes that racism is learned. Racism is reinforced when it is delivered through media such as radio, television, the Internet and motion pictures.

We must become a force of one and use all of our collective energy to remove Mr. Imus from the air permanently.

Dr. Gwendolyn B. Lee
National President of The Links, Inc



Saddened and Dismayed



I am saddened and dismayed by Don Imus' words. The comment was horrendous and the incident reveals an insensitivity that drives shock waves and horrors through us all.

It was wrong and I believe he should be very sorrowful and he should bear the consequences that have been given him.

No one can appreciate the hurt that words cause, except those of us who have been on the other end of it. As an African-American pastor of an historic church, a businessman, husband, father, and grandfather I know what it's like. I not only know what it's like to be called out of my name, treated differently because of the color of my skin, but also to be mistreated and not really hear the words, but know the feeling you get when you're on the other end of someone else's racial prejudice.

As people of faith it's in our DNA to love, forgive and to reconcile. My prayer is that he and others of capacity will do something tangible, not just apologize, but find a university or an organization and donate some time and money to support reconciliation and forgiveness as a staple of the American way of life.

J. W. Matt Hennessey
Senior Pastor, Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church

Reinforcing Stereotypes

As a father of two daughters, I am deeply troubled and personally offended by the inflammatory and insensitive remarks made by radio shock jock Don Imus toward the Rutgers University women's basketball team.

His racist and sexist comments do nothing more than reinforce racial and gender stereotypes in this nation across public airwaves, which are owned by us all.

What did these women do to deserve such disrespect? They made it all the way to the NCAA basketball finals. They aspired to excellence. These ladies showed courage and determination, giving inspiration not only to African American girls but to the world.

What kind of message are we sending to our youth when we allow Mr. Imus to hurl his inane vitriol at a group of outstanding Americans trying to make a positive mark on their world?

The First Amendment gives us the right to express our point of view but it doesn't give us the right to use public-owned airwaves to communicate it.

Marc H. Morial
National Urban League President

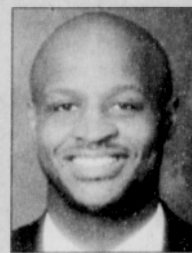


Leaders Stand United

It is unconscionable that in this day Don Imus would be comfortable saying such hateful and hurtful phrases about the women's basketball players at Rutgers University.

The Rutgers players are talented young women who have carried themselves in a manner that brings pride to their university, their coaches and fellow students as well as the African-American community. Their reaction to this situation has been nothing short of dignified, a fact Mr. Imus would fail to prove otherwise.

It is essential that African-American political leaders stand united



and send a resounding message to Mr. Imus that his comments were highly disrespectful and will not be tolerated anywhere in this nation.

We call on the media to review the actions and words, not only of Mr. Imus, but of all broadcasters in the coming months to ensure they are fair and objective chroniclers of today's society, reflecting the broad diversity that is America.

Terry Riley, president of the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials

Letter to the Editor

Don't Blame Community

Your article (Public Schools Divided by Race, March 28 issue) provides one more example of Portland Public Schools' leadership blaming the Jefferson community for the school district's failure.

School Board Member Dilafruz Williams suggests that it is the community's fault that Jefferson is less diverse than the surrounding neighborhood, when it is a documented fact that school district policies have increased racial segregation.

A 2006 audit by the City of Portland and Multnomah County found that the PPS Transfer Policy has increased segregation of local schools, even while the surrounding neighborhoods have become less segregated. The audit also found that the transfer policy has weakened lower income and minority schools.

Charter school director Stephanie Hinkle commented in the article on the top-down approach to education at Jefferson. However, Hinkle seems unaware that the top-down reforms (reorganizing Jefferson again into separate academies, narrowly focused curriculum, 6-12 grade configuration, and single-gender programs) are being imposed by the school district and are not supported by Jefferson neighborhood families or by educational research.

PPS says that the goal of the Jefferson Redesign was to increase enrollment and student learning at Jefferson and that a Community-

based Design Team recommended this latest reorganization of Jefferson. But the following facts dispute that conclusion:

- PPS and the Portland Schools Foundation applied for a grant from the Gates Foundation in September 2005 to divide Jefferson into separate schools, months before the Jefferson Design Team made any recommendations.
- The Jefferson Design Team never recommended dividing Jefferson into four separate schools - the superintendent did.
- Jefferson was returned to one high school in 2006 at the insistence of the Design Team, yet PPS continues to operate it as separate schools, and plans to add two more - schools that are not recognized by the Oregon Department of Education.
- Hundreds of parents, students, teachers and community members spoke out at public hearings and in writing to oppose splitting Jefferson into separate schools and to suggest better ways to strengthen Jefferson.
- Research does not support the claim that dividing high schools into small separate schools increases student achievement, but research does indicate that such reorganizations can actually be detrimental to student learning.
- Research strongly supports the need for reforms to have community buy-in and support in order to be successful.
- Small learning communities can be created without dividing into small separate schools, and Jefferson already had small learning communities in place for 9th and 10th graders before the latest reorganization.
- Jefferson was making above average increases in test scores in recent years prior to the School District proposal to reorganize it into four separate schools.
- Curriculum offerings for students in the small high school programs at Jefferson, Roosevelt, Madison, and Marshall are extremely limited compared to course offerings at other PPS high schools in wealthier, whiter neighborhoods.
- Students are often assigned to the small high school programs based on space not student interest.
- The small high schools at Roosevelt have become segregated by race.
- One of the district's proposed "Jefferson academies" will not even be located in the Jefferson cluster, since PPS moved the Boise Eliot attendance area, where Harriet Tubman school is located out of the Jefferson attendance area and into the Grant cluster.
- The School District put Jefferson on notice that it may close Jefferson in a few years if enrollment doesn't increase and then adopted a plan to divide Jefferson into small separate schools that were overwhelmingly undesired by Jefferson community families.
- Small, narrowly focused high schools are susceptible to closure - one of the four small schools at Marshall was closed one year after opening due to PPS budget cuts.
- PPS has many more requests to transfer out of small high schools with a narrow curriculum focus, and into high schools with comprehensive course offerings.
- According to PPS demographic data from 2005, there are more high school students living in the Jefferson community than any other high school neighborhood, but a huge percentage of those students transfer to high schools in other neighborhoods with more curriculum offerings.
- Approximately 2/3 of black students and 3/4 of white students in the Jefferson neighborhood transfer to other high schools.
- Jefferson neighborhood families want the same thing for their children that families in other PPS neighborhoods want for their children.
- The School District is forcing top-down "reforms" at Jefferson that are making the school less attractive to students of all racial and economic backgrounds.

I won't be voting for Dilafruz Williams or any of the other school board members who are up for re-election in May.

Nicole Breedlove
Jefferson Neighborhood Parent

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