Is Tracy Morgan Just Another Hater...And What About the Rest of Us?

June 13, 2011 By Kate Ferguson

It's true. I'm coming late to the party because I didn't hear about Tracy Morgan's much-discussed homophobic comedy routine until people were demanding he apologize tout suite. So I asked a co-worker to send me links to the latest news about the 30 Rock star.

After I read the articles, I started surfing the web to see what people were saying. From what I read, Morgan crossed the line. Some things, such as advocating murdering your gay child because of his or her sexual orientation, just aren't funny. And if that's free speech, well, think about it...someone, somewhere, somehow, some day might pay a price because he--or someone else spewing hate--spoke out without thinking of the harm their words could cause.

But the more stuff I read about Morgan online, the more I began thinking about today's omnipresent information provider and aggregator and communication conduit, a.k.a. the Internet.

I got to thinking about how incensed some people were about Morgan's "hateful speech." Some thought nothing of spewing their own brand of hatemongering online--name-calling and other mocking and hurtful verbalizing that amazed me. Funny how easy it is for those who accuse others of doing wrong to perpetrate the same crime they charge others with committing.

Today, many Internet users are guilty of the same kind of hateful speech Morgan employed in his comedy stage show. Whether the issue is homophobia, or some other stigma-generating topic, people routinely bully, bait and victimize others online. The tactics they use are the same ones constantly used by those who wish to devalue and dismiss others. They dehumanize and demonize people with impunity. Yet, for the most part, online hate speech continues to proliferate unchallenged.

Just as Tracy Morgan's combustible comedy routine blew up in his face and exposed the deep-seated ugliness that lies at the heart of all hate-filled rants, the same should happen to those who use the Internet to practice their art of the poison pen.

In this instance, Morgan's celebrity got what he said noticed. But while we're vilifying Morgan, let's remember to also do the same to those nameless speechifiers who post venomous statements via "anonymous" comments on countless Internet sites. (Oh yes, and hold them accountable too!)

In these days of anything goes and say-what-you-like speech, reportedly Morgan said he didn't care if he angered gay people with his inflammatory comments. But Morgan was quickly censured.

That said, when anyone condones violence against others--be he or she a celebrated actor-comedian or

anonymous member of Joe Q. Public--what he or she says should not go unchallenged.

Oh, yes, I've followed the story as it's unfolded. Morgan apologized for his homophobic jokes and expressed mea culpas to all concerned. Is he sincere?

Well, some say yes and some say no. Let's see how long people's comments stay civilized, conversational and venom-free.

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