

# Eye on Editorials

## PAIR OF PENNIES

## Stereotypes

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Last night I went to see a movie with my girlfriend at the local theater. We decided upon "Date Night," starring Tina Fey and Steve Carrell and arrived at the theater just a few minutes before show time. Pulling into our parking spot, I looked up and saw a three-generation black family leaving the movie theater and piling into the silver minivan.

I put my mind to work, debating for a second, and then decided to proceed with my joke. Pretending to eye the board displaying the movie titles, I said, "I didn't know there was a Tyler Perry movie out right now!" I sat still, smile on my face, waiting to see if she got the joke. But instead of, "Dannnn..." or "Oh, stop it," she responded with "Yeah it's called 'Why Did I Get Married Too?'" Jaw on floor.

I couldn't believe it. My joke, based on both an old Time article about Perry and personal experience, was suddenly possible, and in my mind, probable. The irony of the situation increased the hilarity to me, but got me thinking--was the joke ok?

Obviously, it was intended to be a little edgy, and the jocular implication, though not serious, was that a black family must only be here if there was a "black movie" in the theater. Is that how I really feel? Of course not. Was the joke a little tasteless? Yea, probably. The best jokes are.

In fact, the best comedy always pushes envelopes about sexuality, race, morality, politics, and the general order of things. For some reason, though, we only find it funny on television or in a stand-up routine. The numbers-savvy Asian, the flamboyant gay, the thugged-out black, the nerdy white, the gardening Mexican, the hungry fat kid. These comedic staples run rampant throughout our entertainment systems and for good reason: they're hilarious! They are egregiously stereotypical and

terribly funny. Funny, that is, when on television.

When, however, someone who is overweight comes back from the buffet's ice cream machine with a dinner plate full of soft serve, its mean for me to laugh. I imagine Kevin Malone of "The Office" executing that same action and just want to giggle. So, where's the line? Stereotypes are only material if you're getting paid to use them?

I mean, I sort of get it--the ice cream-loving chunky kid is more laughable than the assumption that a black family is out only to see a black movie. The reason why is clear enough, also: the first situation fills an already established stereotype. Life fit the stereotype. Flip it and suddenly there is a new issue. But is it wrong to make associations between groups and characteristics when experience or humor encourages such an association?

I had a friend in high school who continuously shocked and outraged students with his confident, stereotyped analysis of the world. One day he let a couple of jokes roll, and one started "A gay man, a black man, and a lawyer walk into a bar..." and ended with laughs and shock smattered throughout the room. When someone expressed discontent with the joke he casually responded, "Stereotypes exist for a reason."

Really, they probably exist for lots of reasons, but the idea was that repeated observation eventually becomes concentered in the mind. Moreover, at least sometimes, they're true. Consider this: a man named Tom sees, over the course of two or three months, six of his friends betrayed by men/whites/gays/doctors/Christians (circle the best answer), then we could understand why, though not logically sound, the assumption that men/whites/gays/doctors/Christians were disloyal. Similarly, that's why I don't have to finish the joke, "How

does an Asian couple name their baby..." for you to estimate the punch line. The difficulty of speaking Asian names for many people have already been cemented into a clearly associated stereotype.

We--and I want to clearly state that I am among this "we"--generally think and act in stereotypes daily. We drop our Rs at the full-service gas station and pick them back up at the doctor's office. One of my co-workers, a young black woman, tunes into gangstaspeak when black customers come through the drive thru. Now why would she do that?--surely not all black customers speak in such a way, but apparently enough do for her to make the jump from simply observing gangstaspeak to using it whenever black customers show up.

This discussion still has yet to funnel into a clearly stated point. I want to say that stereotypes are similar to statistics, except that they are created by the same person who plans to use them. Events observed and repeated are filed away into the brain, which in turn create our perspective of the world, and can therefore be indicative of real-life trends. But that's only one side of a thick coin. The other screams at the injustices of denying personality, cultural relativity, and the counterexamples of stereotypes. That's fair--reducing the complexities of character to a pre-described prejudice is no good, but jokes are jokes.

I'll leave you with two things to remember. The first, a joke: A priest and a rabbi are walking along on the sidewalk in Central Park in New York City. As they pass a young boy, he bends over to tie his shoe, and the priest whispers to his companion, "Let's screw this kid," to which the rabbi responds, "But out of what?"

And the second, stereotypes exist for a reason.

### EDITORIAL:

## Think of the Children

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"Think of the children..." normally when you hear these words they precede all manner of inane moralizing arguments rife with prosily. After all if we don't think of the children, then rap lyrics, "the gays", sex education in public schools or whatever else causes these dimwits to fly into histrionics, will "scar them for life, turn them into socialists, etc..." Yet when it comes time to actually think of the children, school budgets are often cut, cafeteria food is third rate sludge high on calories and not much else, and in some school districts, parents still push for the teaching of intelligent design as a viable alternative to one of the largest most substantiated scientific theories of all time.

The sorry state of the educational system in this country while lamentable is still not as bad as an organization, with a history of institutionalized pedophilia and pederasty that still has the unmitigated audacity to call itself a "moral authority." This is the same organization that has claimed that condoms do not prevent the spread of the AIDS virus, opposes gay marriage, "the social acceptance of homosexuality," and believes that a bunch of celibate weirdoes' dressed in robes, and oversized hats are infallible.

The Catholic Church when once again confronted with evidence of wrongdoing and the sexual molestation of children resorts to the "we aren't the only ones doing it" defense. I recommend reading the blog entry by New York archbishop Timothy Dolan in defense of Pope Benedict to truly understand just how self-righteous and out of touch these people are. (<http://blog.archny.org/?p=581>) Some choice excerpts from his blog include:

"Pope Benedict XVI himself has expressed hurt, anger, sorrow, and contrition. As Prefect of

the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and now as Pope, he is seen as one "who gets it" when it comes to the horror of clergy sexual abuse, and who has placed the full force of the Apostolic See, the Vatican, behind efforts to reform."

This if of course the same Pope who "resisted pleas to defrock a California priest with a record of sexually molesting children, citing concerns including "the good of the universal church," according to a 1985 letter bearing his signature." (From the AP) [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/us\\_pope\\_church\\_abuse](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/us_pope_church_abuse) Dolan then attempts to provide justification for the Church's molestations with this gem:

"So Friday's headline, only the most recent, stings us again: "Doctor Asserts Church Ignored Abuse Warnings," as the psychiatrist who treated the criminal, Dr. Werner Huth, blames the Church for not heeding his recommendations."

"Stings us again," why yes we let a man continue to abuse children for years, but it is okay as people didn't know any better back then, even though known child molesters can never be allowed with children once caught. While Dolan attempts to concentrate the readers focus on the 1962 case, the facts remain that as recently as the past decade; the Church's doctrinal office had only chosen to proceed with church trials for less than 10% of the 3000 cases of abuse reported to them between the years of 2000 and 2010. This sort of inaction is inexcusable and goes to show that the NAMBLA has some serious competition. Continuing through Dolan's blog we come to this:

"What adds to our anger over the nauseating abuse and the awful misjudgment in reassigning such a dangerous man, though, is the glaring fact

that we never see similar headlines that would actually be "news": How about these, for example?

"Doctor Asserts Public Schools Ignored Abuse Warnings," since the data of Dr. Carol Shakeshaft concludes that the number of cases of abuse of minors by teachers, coaches, counsellors, and staff in government schools is much, much worse than by priests;

"Doctor Asserts Judges (or Police, Lawyers, District Attorneys, Therapists, Parole Officers) Ignored Abuse Warnings," since we now know the sober fact that no one in the healing and law enforcement professions knew back then the depth of the scourge of abuse, or the now-taken-for-granted conclusion that abusers of young people can never safely work closely with them again."

I'm going to gloss over the obvious and state, that while abuse has occurred primarily in isolated incidents in other institutions. That does not excuse the Catholic Church, an organization, with a bureaucracy in place to put the brakes on allegations of molestation from sheltering and willingly abetting and enabling abuse, through inaction, outright denial, and by shuffling known molesters between different parishes.

I suppose that this is to be expected of an organization whose archbishop of Turin, Cardinal Severino Poletto, tells visitors to view a medieval forgery of a moldering burial shroud "with their hearts rather than their minds," which is well and good for cons and charlatans preying on the simple-minded, but not for dealing with child molesters, unless of course you "really love" children.